

OUR  
SENSATION  
NOVEL



*EDITED BY JUSTIN H. McCARTHY M.P.*

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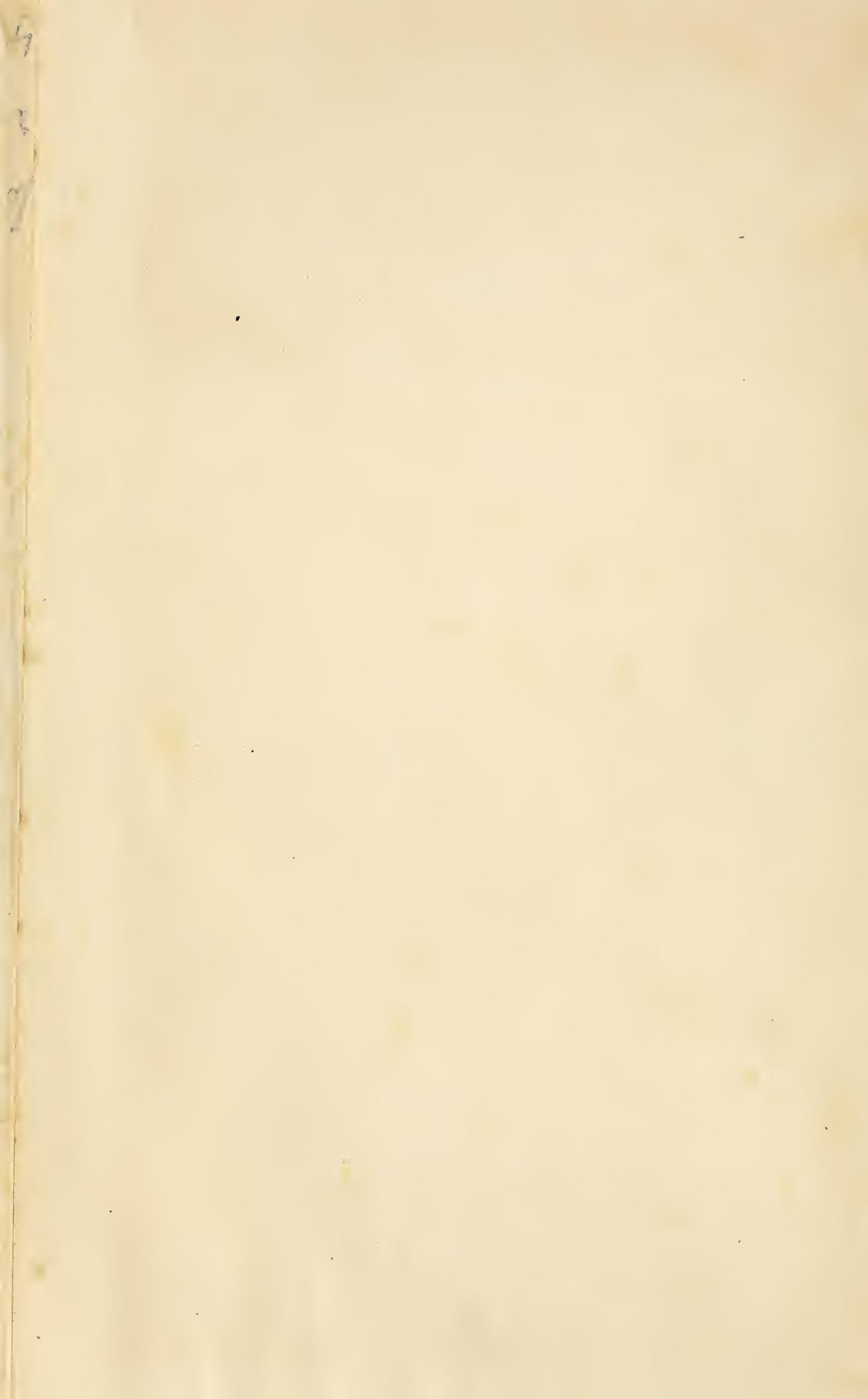
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# OUR SENSATION NOVEL

EDITED BY

JUSTIN HUNTLY MCCARTHY, M.P.



London

CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1886

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PRINTED BY  
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TO THE UNKNOWN AUTHOR OF THESE PAGES

I Dedicate

THEIR VERY LONG DEFERRED APPEARANCE IN PRINT

IN THE HOPE THAT THEY MAY PERHAPS MEET HIS EYE

AND EARN FOR ME HIS GRATITUDE

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## PROEM.

How the following story came into my possession I do not intend to say. Perhaps I obtained it, as the student in Hans Andersen's story obtained his precious volume, at a huckster's counter. Perhaps I found it, as Cervantes professed to have found the story of his hero, extant and written in very choice Arabic. Perhaps I discovered it hidden away behind a wine-cask in a cellar, as, if I remember rightly, the love lyrics of Propertius were discovered. Let it suffice that it is at once mine and not mine—mine in the sense in which the hair of Smollett's beau was his own, namely, that it is my property; not mine, because, to my regret, I am not the author.

It has occurred to me that I should be acting in unkindly fashion towards a generation that revels in sensational romance if I were to keep any longer to myself my mysterious MS. When I read it for the first time, I seemed to find lurking between its lines strange reminiscences of older times and things; echoes of other stories rang in my ears, and before my eyes there moved a pallid proces-

sion of ghosts, the phantoms of an earlier fiction. As certain faint perfumes and certain tender tunes arouse ancient and undefinable memories, so this story has aroused vague recollections which decline to take decided shape. Whether the tale will kindle like associations in other minds, whether others will succeed in solving the problem that has puzzled me, remains yet to be seen.

JUSTIN HUNTRY MCCARTHY.

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# OUR SENSATION NOVEL

## PREFACE.

‘THEODOSIUS,’ suddenly exclaimed my wife, Constantia, ‘we are poor !’

I acknowledged the fact.

‘Our eldest son,’ proceeded the matron, ‘to-morrow departs for college ; our eldest daughter requires her *trousseau* !’

‘It is true,’ I calmly replied. Husbands and wives, in the domestic drama, always thus narrate to each other in their moments of stage privacy the most familiar circumstances of their lives.

‘We want money,’ she continued, ‘and you have not got any.’

I assented.

‘Then,’ she exclaimed, ‘why don’t you get money ? Why don’t you write a sensation novel ?’

I faltered. I urged that I had never read a novel of any kind. She promptly replied, ‘Send to Mudie’s ; read up five or six, catch the style, and go to work.’

The idea was at least a striking one. Why not ?

‘Constantia,’ I exclaimed, fired with the thought, ‘do you pledge me your assistance ?’

‘Hear me swear,’ was the answer of that remarkable woman.

We buried ourselves deep in a pile of novels. I read one half and she the other. We only studied the successful, and our aim was the sensational.

Having read sufficient, we then wrote. On a given day I triumphantly produced my half; Constantia laid her bundle of manuscript, charmingly crossed and re-crossed, beside mine.

We arranged the work in alternate chapters. Each pronounced the other's share a masterpiece. The production blended wonderfully. We read the whole to a literary friend, who observed that he feared there was a lack of originality—an appearance of imitation—about some few passages. Of course he was absurdly mistaken. He advised us against publication. We saw through his motive, and at once rejected his advice.

To a public possessed of higher appreciation we offer the result of our combined labours—our own Sensation Novel.

## CHAPTER I.

### A PRELUDE OF MYSTERY.

#### NIGHT AND SLUMBER!

Nay, was it night, and was it slumber? or was it mystery, and was it death?

A chamber silent and softly-lighted; only one small window, and even that draped with rich, heavy purple curtains. It was such a chamber as might have suited the illustrator of a book of beauty wherein to enshrine his fair forms. The floor was so covered with the richest carpeting of Turkey that the heaviest footfall awakened not the slightest sound. The walls were draped with gilded silk and velvet such as the divan of an Egyptian pasha might hardly display. No chairs were seen, but ottomans and cushions were scattered carelessly over the

floor. Need it be said that no flaring gas vulgarised such an apartment as this? Only one soft lamp upon a small table diffusing a faint white light over a portion of the room—the rest lost in shadow. In the deepest shade a couch. If the eye of any strange spectator were upon that room he might, as his vision grew accustomed to the semi-darkness, have discerned that on that couch was a recumbent female form—a girl, young, beautiful, motionless, seemingly lifeless. She wore the costume of European women—that is, of European women when they sleep. Her face was pale as that of the marble Diana. Long tresses of raven hair streamed over her white garment and whiter shoulders.

What is that pale shadow upon the wall beside the couch? Not the reflex conjured up by some phantasmagorial process of the dead or sleeping form? So like in garb and outline! No! this is a reality, and the reality of a breathing, moving form. A form which bends over the couch long and carefully scrutinises the features of the motionless occupant, and at last advances into the light. It is the figure of a woman, draped in white, and with sable hair streaming over her shoulders—a woman apparently older, certainly more worn and wasted, than the being who lies sleepless and seemingly pulseless. The eyes of the watcher as she turned them towards the sleeper were of a lustrous, starry weirdness. And she sighed—such a sigh!

‘It is time,’ she faintly murmured. ‘I must revive her, or it will be too late! ’

She drew from the folds of her robe a small phial filled with some crimson liquid, which emitted sparkles luminous as those of the ruby.

‘Yet a little longer,’ she said in a meditative tone; ‘live yet a little longer, that I may live on—on! Then shall come release for you—life for me! ’

She bent once more over the couch. No pulsation was

apparent ; no breath was heard. After a moment's pause she held the phial, from which she had removed its silver stopper, beneath the nostrils of the entranced sleeper, and she muttered meanwhile some mystic words, breathed like a chant, sounding like a spell in some unknown tongue.

The slumberer sighed deeply, heavily, opened her eyes, breathed again, and then shuddered.

A small time-piece at that moment chimed with a delicate and silvery stroke the hour of twelve.

Twelve o'clock on the night of the thirty-first of March, 1861 ! Let the day and hour be noted !

At that very hour, on that very day, just as that clock was chiming, just as that sleeper awakened, four human beings, separated by space, by rank, by association, by character, shivered, started, sighed, and awakened. These beings were Louis Farbrick, the physician ; Philip Latimer, the Temple student ; Pierre Valpierre, the convict ; and Count Foscoli, the exile. We shall meet these men hereafter.

Meanwhile the watcher stooped over the couch, and pressed her lips to the white bare arm of the girl.

The awakening girl sighed again, then sobbed suddenly and passionately.

‘ Have I been long asleep ? ’ at last she said. ‘ Oh, I have had such terrible dreams. Even still, I scarcely know who I am or who you are ! I dare not recall what I have dreamed.’

‘ Be composed,’ said the elder female calmly. ‘ We are preparing for a journey. And you need rest.’

This scene is but the prelude. It forms no part of the narrative which is to follow ; but it may serve to shed a dim light upon that which might otherwise be all mystery and darkness.

## CHAPTER II.

## LITTLE SIMON SMIFFLES AND THE FOUR STRANGERS.

SOUTHWARK BRIDGE, London, is scarcely a cheerful promenade under the best of circumstances. If a man were to describe Southwark Bridge, London, as a lively place, that man might be considered a mistaken individual. The traffic which crosses Southwark Bridge is not great; the number of coppers which are deposited upon the metallic counter of the toll-bar are not many. Rarely does the click of the turnstile break the subdued silence which hangs over Southwark Bridge. It is not a place of popular resort even for the purposes of suicide, inasmuch as the number of passengers being so very small, and the toll-collector having nothing whatever to do except to scrutinise the faces of each visitor, the official would be certain to read in the countenance of anyone harbouring evil intent the full meaning and motive of his coming, and forthwith to frustrate it. A subdued melancholy hangs over Southwark Bridge and its vicinity even in the midst of summer. The bluebottles do not buzz there as if they felt interested in anything, but only drone with a deadly-lively hum as if they did not exactly know what they wanted there and did not precisely care. Passengers who went up and down the river in penny-steamers looked with a sort of vacuous curiosity at Southwark Bridge, as to a place of which nobody knew anything and about which it would be scarcely worth while to inquire.

But at night and in winter! In winter when the howling blast which swept across from the Surrey Hills rushed over Southwark Bridge to meet the other howling blast which raged down from the heights of Holborn and the ascent of Tottenham. When the river surged, and foamed, and bellowed around the buttresses beneath. When the

fog mantled the streets and made the sky a murky yellow and the eyes of passengers a fiery red. When the Strand was a desert and the Haymarket a howling wilderness. When the omnibuses staggered along the slippery streets and the rattling hansom ran into the lumbering van. When the barges bumped against the sides of the wharves and the penny-boats did not dare to encounter the middle passage from Westminster to London Bridge. When people clung shivering around coffee-stands in the Borough and devoured eagerly fried potatoes in Clare Market. When from bright fires in warm rooms pleasant sitters glanced occasionally at the windows and shuddered even in their comfort to hear the rain splash against the panes. When sleepers suddenly started from their dreams, awakened by the crash of the neighbouring chimney-pot, and affrighted drew their nightcaps down and their bedclothes up, and shivering tried in vain to find slumber again. At times like these, no man or woman would willingly have sought to cross Southwark Bridge.

This, at least, was the opinion of little red-nosed Simon Smiffles, the toll-keeper at the Middlesex end of the bridge, on the night of the first of April, 1861. For that night was wild and grim, and had been preceded by a week of wildness and grimness. First there came a fall of snow; then there came a hard frost, baking and caking the snow; then there came a thaw, melting the frost; then there came rain, turning the melting frost and snow into mud and ooze; then there came wind, blowing the rain in the faces of all wayfarers. And the wind was at its highest, the rain at its fastest, the mud at its deepest, the fog at its densest, at about a quarter before twelve o'clock on the night of the first of April, 1861.

‘There’ll be nobody else come through this night,’ said little red-nosed Simon Smiffles. ‘I think I’ll take a turn-in.’ His nose was very red, partly from nature, partly from cold, and a good deal from rum-and-water.

He was a small man, hoarse of voice and somewhat fishy of eye. 'I think I'll turn in,' said little Simon Smiffles, rubbing the reddest part of the red nose with a solitary halfpenny which he had received an hour before from a dejected tinker who had passed on to the Borough. As he spoke and as he rubbed, he took a last look up the river. The round fiery face of the clock-tower looked down upon him through the fog and the rain from the distant Westminster. The clock glared upon Simon's nose, and Simon's nose glared back upon the clock.

'Good-night,' said the Nose to the Clock. 'I think I'll take a turn——Hallo! what's that? As I'm blest, it's someone a-coming through after all—drat 'em!'

The turnstile creaked, rattled, and twirled. Simon ran to his post. By the light of the lamp at the gate Simon saw a tall figure passing through. One glimpse of a tall figure passing, a form wrapped in a cloak, a sallow cheek, a thick foreign moustache, a set of white teeth which gleamed upon Simon with a strange effect.

'A wet night, friend,' said the stranger with the white teeth.

'Aye, that it be, rayther,' said Simon, in a tone which seemed to say, 'You needn't come out here at the dead of night, teeth and all, to tell us that.' But Simon did not say this, he only thought it.

'Good-night,' said the gleaming teeth.

'Good-night,' rejoined Simon, 'and good-luck,' he added in a grumbling under-tone.

'Now what on earth,' thought Simon, 'brings a man with a handsome cloak and fur collar, a black moustache and white teeth, crossing Southwark Bridge at the dead of night? It can't be suicide, men are never so polite and friendly when they're going to do that, they're always looking about them in a scared sort of way. I kept the toll-bar at Waterloo Bridge long enough to know that,' added Simon. 'He's not going on, neither,' said Simon,

‘for there are his teeth shining on the other parapet through all the fog. Well, it’s no affair of mine; suicide or not, it’s nothing to do with me. Now I think I’ll take a turn-in,’ and he rubbed the red nose again with the half-penny which he had just received.

‘Hallo! what sound is that? The turnstile again! Another passenger!’

This time a man, seen plainly enough, in the garb of an operative. Possibly, from his aspect, a worker in iron. A tall, powerful, elderly man about eight-and-fifty years of age, with thick hair grey and grizzled, and an expression of face severe and thoughtful, yet with a soft and benevolent eye.

‘This is Southwark Bridge, good friend, is it not?’ asked the stranger in a deep voice and with a foreign accent.

‘I should think so,’ said Simon. ‘Stay, don’t be in a hurry, you have given me sixpence. Wait for your change.’

The stranger stopped and gazed upon the thin red-nosed figure.

‘Friend,’ he said, ‘you are old and haply cold. It is a severe night for one so old to watch and wait. I, too, have watched and been cold. Keep the change for yourself.’

Simon stared. He had been a toll-collector, man and boy, for five-and-thirty years, and no one had ever profered him even a voluntary halfpenny before. As if to assure himself of the reality of the fact, he took up the sixpence and rubbed his nose with it. The man had passed on.

‘Well,’ said Simon, ‘this is a go! Two people passing over the bridge near twelve o’clock within a minute of each other, and one of ‘em gives me a sixpence!’ He rubbed his nose again. Perhaps he was about to talk once more of turning in, when to his utter amazement a

hansom came rattling up to the toll-bar, and a young man sprang out, flung a coin to the driver, and then prepared to pass on to the bridge. He paused a moment to light a cigar, and Simon saw a handsome face and a youthful figure. 'A swell,' murmured Simon, at once with practised eye divining the social character of the passenger. 'A swell from a party. But what he wants sending away his 'ansom and walking across Southwark Bridge in this rain, is more than I can guess. It quite beats me,' said Simon, and he rubbed his nose again.

Yes, the latter comer, the swell, had passed on to the bridge, and clearly had no intention of passing off it. He walked half-way across and then turned back, and then kept pacing slowly up and down. When he turned towards Simon, the gleam of his cigar marked his presence like the light of the glow-worm. On the other parapet and in the dark of a recess, Simon thought he could sometimes see a row of gleaming teeth. And plain to any eyes, close under a lamp, stood the foreign working man. Simon could hear him slowly whistling a solemn tune familiar to the congregation of the dissenting body.

Simon had had so many surprises that night, that I don't believe that he would have been in the least amazed if the teeth and cigar had set to fighting a duel with rapiers, and the whistle had acted as second to both. He therefore did not feel in the least amazed when a handsome brougham drove up to his toll-bar, and a well-dressed dignified man under forty years of age came out and prepared to pass on to the bridge.

'Shall I wait, sir?' asked the coachman, touching his livery hat.

'No,' answered the new-comer. 'Straight home—and not a word to anyone.'

The brougham rattled away, its late occupant paid his toll, giving a fourpenny piece and receiving back the change in a calm and self-possessed manner. He too

moved on to the bridge and passed the cigar without recognition, without apparent surprise.

‘I know that last cove’s face,’ said Simon. ‘He’s a doctor, I’m as good as certain. Hallo! What if they *are* going to fight a dooel and he’s come to look after the wounded! ’

How long Simon might have meditated over this view of the question and rubbed his nose to aid his deliberations, there are now no means of knowing. For while he thus stood and thought, the silent air was startled by the chimes of the great clocks preparing to toll, and the midnight hour, St. Paul’s midnight hour, St. Paul’s on Simon’s left and the Clock Tower upon his right, took up the stroke together. Hush! One! Two!

Simon distinctly saw the teeth gleam from the darkness as their owner emerged from his place of concealment.

Three!

Simon saw the fiery spark of the cigar flash through the fog and disappear, as if the smoker in wild impatience had hurled it into the darkling torrent which rushed beneath the arches of Southwark Bridge.

Four!

The notes of the congregational hymn ceased to vibrate in the clear whistle of the stranger.

Five!

The last comer paused in his measured walk and stood suddenly still.

Six!

To his dying day Simon will affirm that just at that moment the light in the Clock Tower suddenly went out and all was dark.

Seven!

Hark, what distant sound of rapid wheels awakening the echoes of the Surrey side! Through the sough of the wild wind, through the roar of the wild water, Simon heard them, heard them, heard them.

Eight! Nine! Ten!

The wheels are heard dashing madly onward. Nearer and nearer!

Eleven!

The wheels are on the bridge! From the Surrey side! They came.

Twelve!

The bridge rattles, bends, sways, and creaks under the weight of a heavy carriage drawn by four fierce foam-covered horses. The carriage is dashed and splashed with mud to its very roof. Simon starts forward to see it as it passes. All the four strangers, two on each side, rush to gaze, none heeding the other. One moment all is darkness, through which only the carriage, its horses, and its mud, can be dimly discerned by the keen and practised eye. Then what sudden flash was that? Too white and pale for lightning, even if lightning could flash from yonder murky, fog-mantled heavens. But it was a white and pale light, revealed perhaps from the carriage itself, which fell like a flash upon the inside of the vehicle and upon the gazers outside at once. And in the sudden glare all could see one pale face at the open carriage windows, now for an instant at this side, now for an instant at that, the pale face of a sad girl, with raven hair mantling round her shoulders, with eyes which gazed out upon the night so deep, so lustrous, so melancholy, so starlike, that even old Simon felt his own watery orbs more watery for a tear as he looked upon the strange apparition. Only a moment the woman's face looked forth. Only a moment the pale brow was illumined by the light of the sad, spiritual, wondrous eyes, which gleamed with so deep a lustre beneath it! Only a moment, and the carriage had dashed onwards, through the gates, and was swallowed up in night and darkness like the night and darkness from whence it had come, through which it had passed!

‘It is she,’ murmured the moustached stranger (he of

the teeth), ‘it is indeed she, I must prepare !’ And, calmly humming an air from ‘Lurline,’ he turned and left the bridge.

‘Only one look !’ whispered the foreign mechanic. ‘But that was enough, I shall not be wanting when the hour comes ; I shall know her again, and I shall be found watching.’ He resumed his hymn and slowly departed.

‘Am I in my senses ?’ the swell asked himself. ‘I seem to myself to be sane. I know I am here on Southwark Bridge very wet at twelve o’clock in the morning, and yet ! That face, those eyes !’ He was gone.

‘Can such things be !’ muttered he whom Simon had called a doctor. ‘Then where is Science, where Philosophy ?’

Simon did not know where they were. But he knew that even although he should now turn in there was no sleep for him that night.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE NARRATIVE OF LOUIS FARBRICK, PHYSICIAN.

I do not expect any one now to believe the extraordinary narrative I am about to relate. Nevertheless, I relate it, partly to relieve my own overburdened mind, partly for the benefit of the more purified and expanded science which is destined to arise hereafter. The world, guided by the mere outward signs, has called me a skilled, successful, and wise physician. Did I record in my real name the narrative I am now about to pen under the assumed name of Louis Farbrick, it would pronounce me idiot, madman. Perhaps hereafter it may honour me as savant, sage, philosopher, prophet. So be it. In the East the madman and the prophet are believed identical.

Let me proceed.

I had inherited a large fortune, and I devoted myself to the healing art merely from love of science. I had been trained to medicine in the profound schools of Germany ; I had redeemed my mind by patient study from prejudice, and I returned to England a believer in nothing.

I settled in the town of X., a hundred miles away from the metropolis, and there I soon had a large and growing circle of patients. I devoted myself to the healing art and to the production of a work, over which years of labour and thought were to be spent, and which was destined to prove that all existing science was sham—that all possible theology was drivel.

I occupied a huge and antique mansion on the summit of a hill. Once this mansion was a monastery. Although a lonely bachelor, I loved a great house and vast apartments. I occupied as my study a room which had been the library. I filled it with the most precious volumes of the earthly science which I despised and designed to confute. I ornamented its walls with the skeletons of the various forms of animal creation and their brother Man.

But I went into society very frequently. Every physician must do this ; and I so loved my art that I made freely for its practice all the sacrifices which the poorest have to make. I loved to heal. I delighted to wrestle with disease. I exulted when, summoned at the latest moment, after every other physician had abandoned hope and effort, to interpose between Death and his prey, and to rob the despoiler of his prize.

One evening I was in company at the house of a lady who held a high position in the town of X. The conversation turned upon the newly-discovered amusement of spirit-rapping. Some of the guests were disposed to believe in it. I scoffed at it and them. I overwhelmed them with my science, my eloquence, my irony. I even went so far as to prove that there could be no spiritual agencies, inas-

much as there could be no spirits. Perhaps the lady of the house thought the conversation was trenching upon dangerous ground, for she suddenly interposed by saying :

‘ Well, Dr. Farbrick, I think if you saw my next-door neighbour you would quite believe in spirits. Such a pale face—and such eyes ! And her daughter—for daughter I suppose she is—with a face still paler and eyes still brighter. I wish you saw them. And to think that they should have taken the haunted house too ! ’

I was impatient at the interruption. What did I care about Mrs. Graham’s next-door neighbours, their pale faces, and their eyes ? Invalids of all kinds commonly came pouring into our town.

But to my surprise everybody was interested in the new-comers. They appeared to be wealthy and somewhat eccentric ladies, who chose to live alone and to make no acquaintances. They were supposed by some to be mother and daughter, by others to be sisters. Everybody had some ridiculous anecdote to tell about them. One had seen the younger lady at night gazing from her bedroom window at the stars—truly a marvellous prodigy ; another, wandering on the sea-shore at midnight, had met the elder, attired all in white, pacing the strand within reach of the surf, and, as he positively affirmed, conversing with the waves ; a third, a young officer, jestingly, or half-jestingly, affirmed that he had seen the elder in India some years before, but that she was then a Bayadere. The talk grew loud and animated.

‘ Of whom do you speak ? ’ asked the grandfather of the hostess, a melancholy, doting old man, ninety years of age, who always sat in a stuffed chair by the fire winter and summer, and rarely opened his lips.

‘ Only of a lady newly come to live here, grandfather,’ replied Mrs. Graham. ‘ She passed under our window yesterday ; you saw her, I think.’

‘ Yes, yes,’ he replied, ‘ I know her ; that’s Norna

Strange. I knew her long ago; she's been a long time away; but she doesn't look any older.'

'Poor grandpapa!' whispered Mrs. Graham; 'his mind is with his youth and its memories. I have heard my mother talk of Norna Strange. She was a lady who came from abroad, married to a Mr. Strange of this town, and they lived together here—indeed, in the very haunted house we were talking of; but her husband died soon, and I believe there were queer rumours and suspicions. At all events, people ceased to visit Mrs. Strange, and she soon went away—to the East, I believe. I suppose she died there; at least, she was gone long before my mother's time.'

'Your mother,' said the old man, 'was a baby at the breast when Norna Strange went away, sixty-five years ago! And so she has come back again after all, and looks as young as ever. Ah, she was a wild one, Norna Strange—something always odd about her! Come back again to the old place after sixty-five years!'

I am sorry to say that some of the younger folks were tittering. I was pained at the poor old man's babble.

'Whom has she got with her?' asked the old man. 'Not her daughter? Norna Strange had no daughter when she went from here.'

'Grandpapa,' said Mrs. Graham, 'don't talk in that foolish way. We don't know anything about Mrs. Strange; she must have been dead years before we were born. We are speaking of a lady, quite a young person, who has just come to live in X.'

'I tell you,' said the old man, partly raising himself in his chair and speaking in shrill and animated tones, 'I saw the woman you mean passing this window, and it's Norna Strange herself! Do you think I don't know Norna Strange? There were not so many like her. Why, I was in love with her myself; but she was a queer one. Look here—here's her portrait.' And the poor old creature,

after much fumbling, produced a small medallion, which he extended in his shaking hand. Some one took it, out of mere good-nature to satisfy the aged dreamer.

‘Well, I do protest,’ said the first who received it, ‘that I don’t wonder at Mr. Marley’s belief. This certainly is a face as like that of our new neighbour as one face can be to another. And what a remarkable countenance! What eyes! ’

The miniature was passed from hand to hand, and each new recipient wondered more than the last at the striking likeness.

‘I do really believe,’ said Mrs. Graham, ‘grandpapa is so far right that our new resident must be the daughter or granddaughter of this terrible Norna Strange. What a name, and what a face! Do look at this face, Dr. Farbrick.’

I took the miniature very coldly and carelessly. I thought it highly probable that the daughter or granddaughter of a former resident might have come to visit X. and might be like her grandmother. And the circumstance did not strike me as either remarkable or interesting. So I took the miniature carelessly, but I confess I started when I looked at it.

‘Why,’ I said, ‘this is no Mrs. Strange. This is a miniature—and remarkably well-executed, too—of Lamia Montbesome, the famous sorceress of James the Second’s days: the last great witch who was burned for pretending she could renew youth by the sacrifice of human victims. I have her portrait at home by a famous artist of the day, Von Sabbat, who travelled to England especially to paint her. It was given me as a dying bequest by a descendant of the artist’s, who was my college friend in Germany.’

‘Really,’ said Mrs. Graham, ‘our new visitor seems to be like everybody. But we had better give grandpapa back his miniature and change the subject. He will wander off again if we say another word about it.’ I almost think

Mrs. Graham took my remarks as a sort of badinage, and was a little annoyed.

But the most singular part of the matter was that, although I had laid the miniature upon the table while speaking, when we came to look for it it was gone. In vain we sought everywhere; in vain every man and woman present searched, shook, turned out every pocket, pocket-book, case, or crypt of any kind. The miniature was gone. I fear that some eyes looked strangely upon me. Only my high character screened me from the base suspicion of having purloined the worthless trinket. Mrs. Graham looked amazed, but said not a word. Two or three present had, indeed, seen me place the thing on the table, but did not observe whether I took it up again or what had become of it. Finally, we all agreed, or professed to agree, that it would be found somewhere in the room after the guests had departed; and we sincerely congratulated ourselves that the poor old man did not miss it, but had fallen back into his ordinary condition of apathy or unconsciousness.

But the harmony of the evening had somehow been broken up, and we separated very shortly after. I walked home alone, disturbed and out of humour, I scarcely knew why.

Arrived at home, I could not sleep. The night was bright but wild. A clear moon and keen stars shone in the heavens, but torn masses of cloud sometimes swept across the sky. The beams of light now fell upon my lonely chamber, and brightened into a ghastly joyousness the skeletons and skulls which adorned it; and anon a mass of sombre cloud hid the orb of night, and made my grim companions only dim and confused shadows. I remained for a while motionless in the nearly dark room, gazing upon the heavens.

‘What to me,’ I exclaimed internally, ‘what to me the babble of yon dotard? Can the dreamings of second childhood disturb the meditations of the sage? Is the

philosopher to be at the mercy of the fool? Must I, the savant, the acolyte of practical science, the scholar of materialism, be distracted from my calm course by the drivel of yonder foozle? Away with the thought! What concerns me the passing visit of some idle stranger, the chance resemblance of a face, the easily-explained disappearance of a portrait? Let me return to my science and my work.'

I flung myself from the window. I lighted my lamp, seated myself obstinately at my desk, and opened my precious manuscript. I resumed my labour upon the chapters pertaining to witchcraft among our forefathers and to spiritualism among ourselves. I was just bringing to a close a triumphant confutation of all belief in the possibility of the supernatural, and I calmly surveyed the completed passages to discover if anywhere the keenest criticism could note a flaw in the reasoning. No, nowhere! 'Ha!' I exclaimed; 'this book once published, and superstition is no more!'

I almost started to hear my spoken words responded to by a deep sigh issuing apparently from the ground beneath my feet!

Folly! This was the first time I had ever known in practice what people mean when they talk of nerves. I smiled to myself. Alas, and is this our human science! The triumphant vindicator of materialism shudders at the sound of a gust of wind!

I glanced involuntarily at the portrait of Lamia Montbesome which hung above my chimney.

'Poor self-deluded impostor,' I exclaimed, 'what marvel that you could dupe the idle and the ignorant, when a puff of wind can convert the sage into the simpleton.'

Was I awake? Had my own scepticism, reacting, made me a dreamer and a dupe? To my amazed eyes a pale, wan light seemed shed around the portrait, and the features seemed to move in a smile!

Determined not to yield to delusion, I tore the picture from its place and laid it face downwards upon the table. Too much writing, I thought, has dazzled my sight. I will look upon that portrait no more until my eyes have regained their wonted power. I will open my library and read.

I put my hand into my pocket to find the key, and, to my intense surprise and vexation, drew forth the missing portrait which had been sought for so vainly at Mrs. Graham's. How had I contrived to bring it away unknown to myself? I felt satisfied that I had searched in every pocket, and searched in vain. I flung the thing pettishly on the table side by side with the other. By Heaven, they were precisely alike! No human eye could have distinguished one from the other! And the medallion, which I had purposely laid face downwards, was now upturned and gazing full into my eyes!

Again I heard the same deep sigh which had startled me before from my favourite work.

Perhaps I might have grown half distraught with perplexity and anger at myself, when a loud ringing at the door recalled my attention to more common life. A patient, no doubt.

My male servant presently announced that Mrs. Palegrave desired my attendance immediately, and that her carriage awaited me outside.

Mrs. Palegrave! I had never heard the name before. I hurried from the study, leaving everything as before, got into the carriage, and was driven away. I own that I was weak enough to feel some emotion when, by the intermittent light of the moon, I saw that we had entered the gates of the ground surrounding the long uninhabited tenement which stupid gossips called the haunted house. But I had little time for amazement, as I was hurried through a magnificently furnished but dreary hall into an apartment where, in a moment after, the lady of the house presented herself. And I own that, even then, summoned to the

practical and earnest duties of my sacred profession, I was startled at the likeness she bore to the portraits of Norna Strange and of Lamia Montbesome.

Beautiful, but intensely pale, with deep, cold, star-like eyes : looking not as youth ever looks, yet presenting none of the outward indications even of approaching age—such, clothed all in white, was the woman who stood before me. She hastily explained (in a clear, peculiar tone of voice, which seemed somehow as if it came from a distance) that her daughter, travelling with her for the benefit of her health, had suddenly fallen ill and lay in something like a trance.

One moment more, and I stood by the bedside of an entranced girl ; one moment more, and I was myself entranced, absorbed in the deepest, the most passionate, the most unchanging love ! Yes, one glance at the form which lay motionless upon that couch had decided my destiny ! I loved Lucilia Palegrave—loved her madly, and for ever !

Shall I describe her ? Could I—can I—might any words describe her ? She was youth, she was beauty, she was spirit, she was star, she was Heaven ! Otherwise, she was a younger likeness of the woman who bent over her. A likeness, but so different ! If Lucifer the fallen had a younger brother, beautiful like him in face, but, unlike him, retaining all the glory of the true angel, the aspect of that younger, brighter being of light would have borne the same resemblance to that of his lost elder as did the face of Lucilia Palegrave to that which stooped above her.

I remembered that I was a healer, not a lover. Love, even the most sacred, presenting itself in the form of the physician by the couch of the sick, is an unhallowed intruder.

I began by applying the usual restoratives. The first sign of returning consciousness was a deep sigh—the

very sigh I had twice heard in my distant and lonely chamber !

I suppressed all emotion. I asked of the elder lady all the customary questions about previous symptoms, general health, and so forth. I heard that Lucilia—I must call her Lucilia—was not usually out of health, but was generally fragile and delicate—of that temperament which thrills with alarm the mother's heart: that sometimes she fell into long reveries which rendered her almost unconscious: and that on one or two occasions previous to the present she had even fallen into a trance. No previous trance, however, had lasted so long as this.

‘Were I a believer,’ I observed, ‘in the chimera which fools call the mesmeric trance, I should say that your daughter had been mesmerised by some juggling hand.’

‘It cannot be,’ the mother calmly answered. ‘No one has seen her but me—and you. You, I think, foreswear such delusions?’

I was about to repeat my profession of scepticism, when I happened to gaze upon the white, uncovered arm of the lovely patient.

‘What is this?’ I asked; ‘she has been bled?’

‘She has not been bled,’ was the cold firm answer.

‘Surely,’ I whispered, ‘the recent mark of the lancet is on that arm? To bleed her in such a state was madness?’

‘I have already said,’ replied Mrs. Palegrave, ‘that she has not been bled. No physician has seen her but you.’

As I judged it more prudent to allow the patient to recover gradually her senses, we left the room and returned to the outer apartment. I had given certain prescriptions and recommended certain regulations. For the first time we were together in a brightly lighted room (the lamps were all illuminated that I might write), and I looked at the pale face of Mrs. Palegrave with some atten-

tion. I am not sure that I did not visibly start when I observed that some crimson stains were mantling around her lips ! I cannot describe the extraordinary, wild, extravagant, incoherent, mad sensation of unmeaning horror which pervaded me. Suddenly glancing at the mirror, to note if my features betrayed any emotion, I saw that Mrs. Palegrave had smiled a livid smile—the very smile which I believed I had seen for a moment upon the pallid lips of the witch's portrait !

'Am I destined,' I thought, 'to lose my reason to-night ? Am I already mad ? Can I not look at a trumpery picture ? Can I not converse with an ordinary stranger upon a common case of trance, without my senses being distracted with the chimeras of the most ignorant superstition ? Away such paltry dreaming. Let me discharge my duty, and go home to rest my fevered head !'

Again that sigh ! This time, however, it came but from the sick chamber and brought with it no supernatural terror. But it seemed to me that a faint voice whispered in my ear, 'Leave me not ; we need each other.'

Perhaps it was indeed but the cry of my new-born love. I resolved to obey its dictates as if it were the message of an angel. But I could find no excuse for prolonging any more my visit that night ; so, pledging myself to call early next morning—oh, how I longed for the morning !—I was conveyed home again in the carriage which had been kept waiting for me. When I was leaving Mrs. Palegrave placed in my hand the customary fee—I know not what impulse urged, nay, forced me to fling it from the carriage window.

At home again ! My heart was distracted with new love, and with other emotions as new, but less delicious. I entered my study. All was dark save for one bright beam of blue light. It beamed around the witch's portrait.

'Curious phosphorescent effect,' I murmured, resolved to return to any rationalistic and scientific explanations.

‘I must examine the composition of this medallion to-morrow.’

I lighted my lamp and took involuntarily from my shelves the quaint old volume detailing the life, pretensions, and death of the beautiful, deceitful, and unfortunate Lamia Montbesome. The chronicle was the work of a firm and an awed believer. I smiled at its simple superstition, as I glanced over a passage or two. I had never cared to read the book before. I turned over carelessly the accounts of wondrous cures, of marvellous enchantings and paralysings; of the terrible tests applied to the unhappy woman. Suddenly a sentence arrested my attention:

‘And shee boasted that she could and would live for ever by means of absorbing into herself ye life of some younge maydene. And indeed she had alwaies in her companie and under her sorceries some maydene who after a while grewe, of outward aspect, like unto herselfe.’

Just as I had arrived at this point—and was, I own, growing painfully, weakly interested—a cold air seemed to pass through the room and to lift my hair with a thrilling sensation. The lamp was suddenly extinguished, and the book fell to the ground. I am as brave as most men, but I could hear the beating of my own heart. Plainly as I have ever seen aught in my life, I saw a luminous hand—the hand of a woman semi-transparent white, shining in an atmosphere of pale, phosphorescent unflickering fire—pass through the air towards the fallen volume. A voice spoke in hissing, spectral tones, the word ‘Fool,’ and a demoniac laugh resounded through the air. Then I felt my forehead touched as by cold fingers—and I sank unconscious in a chair.

When I awoke it was bright day. The book and the medallions were gone! I made every search after both—in vain.

Days passed away. Every happy morning I was admitted to the presence of my beloved Lucilia. She recovered.

She regained health, strength, and brightness—and all through my care. In the delight of watching over her I forgot my visions, or explained them away to myself by some commonplace physiological solution. Mrs. Palegrave became to my eyes and mind an intellectual, fascinating, strangely-gifted woman, absorbed, indeed, to a somewhat morbid degree in watching over the symptoms of her daughter's health, but nothing more. She had apparently travelled through many and distant lands. Indeed, Lucilia told me that her own earliest memories were associated with cities of the East, with dusky, reverential attendants, with the camel and the palm. I loved Lucilia more and more with each day. Her mind seemed filled with the tenderest thoughts, the most exquisite images of beauty. Only sometimes she appeared to sink into strange reveries, and she acknowledged to me that there were periods when her soul seemed to leave her and dwell apart—when, although moving and conscious of all outward sounds and objects, she seemed to lose consciousness of self when memory and even the existence of the spirit seemed suspended. But of these dreamy intervals, the offspring of mere nervous temperament, I fondly hoped and firmly believed that I was destined to relieve her wholly. For I knew she loved me! Yes; she had acknowledged at last with her pure and virgin lips the love I dared to read in her violet, star-illumined orbs! What cared I for fame or fortune, for metaphysics or for controversy, for the drear babble of the dull schoolman or the pretended love of the vain visionary? Lucilia loved me—and I asked no more.

Mrs. Palegrave approved of our love. She said she was wealthy and needed not a wealthy suitor for her daughter; and my means in any case were ample. I was received then as a suitor, and each ecstatic evening I passed in the society of my Lucilia is imprinted upon my memory in star-fire.

One slight incident intervened which perplexed me a little. I met Mrs. Graham. She congratulated me on my approaching union, which was known through all the politer circles of X. She spoke of my intended bride enthusiastically, for Mrs. Palegrave and her daughter were no longer strangers in the town. But in the course of casual conversation she remarked upon the old delusion of her grandfather, and observed that Mrs. Palegrave certainly was very like the portrait of Norna Strange. 'You know that we found the portrait?' she said. I had not known it—need I say that the question surprised me?

'Oh, yes,' she added. 'We found it the next day; indeed, it was lying openly on the table. I cannot comprehend how we failed to see it at the time.'

I did not tell her of my strange experience regarding this picture. But I left her a little abruptly, promising to meet her that night at her own house, where Mrs. Palegrave and Lucilia were to visit for the first time.

We met there. The rooms were crowded to excess. I wandered with Lucilia on my arm through ball-room and conservatory; through library and boudoir. We talked of happiness; of love.

Suddenly, Mrs. Graham accompanied by Mrs. Pallgrave approached. 'Come,' said the former, 'I want to introduce my new friends to my venerable grandfather, who longs to see them.' I accompanied the three ladies. We went into a small inner room where the ancient sat in his cushioned chair.

'Grandpapa!' said Mrs. Graham, 'I bring you a new acquaintance. My very dear friend Mrs. Palegrave and her daughter, Lucilia, desire to know you.'

The old man gazed a moment at Lucilia, then at her mother, and started.

'Norna Strange!' he exclaimed, 'Norna Strange! Have you returned to me at last, to Philip Marley?'

One glance at the face of Mrs. Pallgrave showed me a

countenance livid and quivering with suppressed passion, wherein the light of her eyes was as the spectral beam which illumines the orbs of the reanimated dead ! Only a moment. She was composed again and answered with a calm smile :

‘ Mr. Marley evidently mistakes me for some old friend.’

‘ No,’ exclaimed the old man vehemently. ‘ I do not mistake. You are Norna Strange ! Why are you still young and beautiful, while I am old and shrivelled ? You are Norna Strange ! Show me the crimson mark around your neck ! ’

Mrs. Palegrave drew back ; involuntarily I glanced at her neck. It was covered to the chin. An unusual attire for an evening party.

‘ We had better leave the room,’ I urged.

‘ Yes,’ said Mrs. Graham. ‘ Poor grandpapa has not been quite himself this some time, he will be better soon.’

‘ Yes,’ said Mrs. Palegrave, calmly, ‘ let us not disturb him. He will be better to-morrow ! ’

Were those calm words prophetic ? That night I was summoned, immediately after I had returned home, to poor old Mr. Marley’s bed. After he had seen Mrs. Palegrave, madness seemed to have seized him. He raved of Norna Strange. He became again and again convulsed. He called to her now as the beloved of his youth ; now as the faithless betrayer of love ; was a witch, sorceress, fiend.

‘ Beware of Norna Strange,’ he gasped into my ear as I approached him. ‘ Beware of her ! fair as she looks, she is a destroyer. Away your drugs and your words of advice ! Nothing can save me. Norna Strange’s hand is on me, and I am dying ! ’

I begged of all to leave the room. I was left alone with the dying. He slept a little and woke somewhat calmer.

‘Doctor,’ he said, ‘I have dreamed of you, and you have power which you know not. I must see Norna Strange once more. Summon her and she will come.’

‘Norna Strange,’ I exclaimed, ‘if you be a reality and not the dream of madness, appear in this chamber of death !’

The lamp went out with a sigh. A cold air rushed through the room ; and by the bedside of the dying man stood a luminous form. Faint, indistinct, pale, ghastly, but luminous. The form of Lamia Montbesome, of Norna Strange—oh Heavens, of Mrs. Palegrave !

‘Why have you summoned me ?’ asked a clear, cold, spirit voice, sounding as if it issued from the depths of illimitable space and distance.

‘Norna Strange !’ said the dying man, ‘leave the place. Cease to persecute the innocent by your presence and your spells. I command you with all the power of a dying voice, to appear here no more.’

‘Fool,’ replied the voice, ‘over me you have no power. You have failed, and I have succeeded. You have lost, I have won. You die, and I live ! But I leave the place where I might have abode peaceful and harmless but for your folly, where you too might have lived a few wretched months more but that your babbling tongue made me your enemy and your destroyer. Let all who would dare to whisper my secret be warned by your punishments. Farewell, and die !’

Darkness, and silence. I rang the bell impatiently. A light was brought. Mrs. Graham, her husband, and others came in. Too late even for a parting word. We stood beside the couch of a corpse !

‘Over me,’ the phantom had spoken to the dying man, ‘over me you have no power.’ The word was emphasised. I had summoned her and she had come ! Had I then power over that extraordinary existence ? Exerting all

my strength of will, I called upon Norna Strange, and the luminous form appeared once more before me, in my lonely study.

‘Norna Strange,’ I passionately exclaimed, ‘explain to me this fatal mystery! Who are you? Who am I? What marvellous tie binds us to each other?’

A mocking laugh was heard, and the phantom answered: ‘You have not yet the power to bid me speak! I appear, but I answer not. Be mine and let us work together, and you shall be as powerful as I, and live through the age like me. Consent and you are happy. I need your aid, and can repay it.’

‘Never!’ I exclaimed, ‘come what will, be you fiend or woman, I make no compact with Hell!’

Again a laugh. ‘You,’ said the phantom, ‘shall yet be my slave. Were my spells ever to fail me, you are mine through your weak affections. She you love is in my power. Think of her and beware!’

The luminous form was gone, and I gazed into darkness.

Alone, alone! She whom I loved was gone. My heart and hopes were crushed. What cared I for the vulgar curiosity of the prying, for the stupid sneer of the practical? I neither explained nor disputed. To what avail to talk to the multitude, blinded as I had been myself only a few weeks before, of spectral influences, of unseen presences, of agencies over which the real has no control? When Lucilia Palegrave and her mother—her mother!—left the town, the babble of gossips was at first silenced by the explanation that the mother sought restored health for her daughter in some warmer clime. That our engagement was broken off or suspended every one knew. Some supposed nothing more than Lucilia’s failing health. But as I did not accompany the travellers this did not satisfy all. There were those who whispered—how bitterly I laughed

when the whisper reached my ears—that Mrs. Palegrave had detected in the suitor of her daughter the germs of insanity! Yes, I, the wise, ha! ha! the practical, the logician, the sage of materialism, I, was pointed at as a madman! Even Mrs. Graham reported that, when summoned to the bedside of her dying grandfather, I had behaved myself like one scarcely in his right senses. Wild words which I breathed one memorable evening to Mrs. Palegrave herself, had caused her to shrink from me, and had flung Lucilia into that trance, the like state from which all my art could not recall her. Thus, when I parted from my love she knew me not, and spake not to me. Indeed, I had been growing to think myself mad. So calm, so final, so winning, so free of all confusion and agitation, had always been the manner of Mrs. Palegrave, that I sometimes thought my wild suspicions the mere ravings of a growing insanity. One of the last nights that I saw Lucilia, I had been suddenly sent for to attend her in an attack of illness. I had risen and rushed to her home. She had been weakly for some days, and this night was seized with fainting fits. I hurried to her bedside. Mrs. Palegrave bent over her—half dressed, as she had been called from her sleeping chamber. As I entered the room she rose to receive me—and I saw—yes, saw—a crimson mark around her neck. The terrible words of old Marley came back upon me, and I addressed her in vehement reproaches as Norna Strange! She did not reply, but pointed calmly to the girl on the couch. I hurried to Lucilia. She was in a trance from which no skill of mine could restore her!

I saw Mrs. Palegrave again. She never reproached me or alluded to my words, but shunned being alone with me, and, indeed, treated me as one might treat a valued friend in whom insanity was unmistakably developing itself. And so at last they were both gone, and I was alone; a shunned and haunted man.

Haunted, but only by love and memory. Yes, I loved her, dearly, madly, unchangingly. Her image irradiated the gloom of my life. I lived in hope once more to see her. She, like myself, a victim ! She, like myself, spell-bound and tortured ! She, like myself, loving on for ever ! Yes, in all my moments of doubt, wild wonder, alarm, despair, I never despaired of seeing her again. I never doubted of her love.

I quitted X. and settled in London. Calmness at least returned after a while, and I applied myself closely to a practice which each day enlarged. I published one or two books of medical science, which brought me repute in my own profession. I never wrote a work on mental delusions in which I treated of my own case. For I began to fancy, or at least forced myself to admit, that mine was a hallucination of the brain. Possibly, I thought, the only realities underlying the whole illusion were old Philip Marley's doting words and the peculiar crimson mark around Mrs. Palegrave's neck. No doubt I had, unconsciously perhaps at the time, seen that mark immediately after, and converted it into an evidence to sustain my own brain-begotten chimera. Thus I reasoned with, and at last almost convinced myself. Watching by Lucilia's bedside no doubt impaired my nerves and thus made me seem to Mrs. Palegrave a being to whom she was justified in refusing the hand of a daughter who herself was a sufferer from nervous weaknesses. From my own brain had come forth the witchcraft which had juggled us out of love and happiness.

I studied less than before, but attended more actively the practical duties of my profession. I devoted myself to these not indeed with the old fresh zest of earlier days, but with a patient and determined energy. I stole a holiday too from my duties and went abroad. I travelled by the Rhine, and passed some days with an old college friend in Berlin. He was a believer in spiritualism, and I combated the delusion with all my old energy. I retired to my room

one night animated but somewhat tired. My window looked upon the pleasant paths and foliage of the Thiergarten and commanded in the distance the pillars of the Brandenburg Gate, shining white in the moonlight. I gazed long upon the scene.

As I turned away from the window, what shudder, long unknown, was that which passed through my thrilling frame? What chilling air was that which lifted the locks upon my damp forehead? Ah, what pale ghastly light was that which filled the chamber! Yes, it was my old enemy—the luminous form once more!

‘Spirit, fiend!’ I said in tones which were only too tremulous, ‘do you haunt me still?’

And the voice replied: ‘I have need of you. Once more Fate and I offer you a chance. From the far East I return. Five nights from hence stand you on Southwark Bridge, London, at this very hour—midnight. Fail not, and you will learn the rest.’

The cold wind breathed on me, and I became insensible. The sun was sparkling on the foliage and the waters of the Thiergarten when I recovered consciousness.

But be the summons from within or without; from my own again distempered brain, or from an influence outside me; from the world of earth or of air; from woman or from spirit; from Heaven or from Hell, I must and will obey. I left that morning for London.

## CHAPTER IV.

PHILIP LE BEL.

LONDON was filling. The season was approaching its height. Earl de Gauntlet, Baron FitzMace, had come up to town from his country residence, Glaive Castle, Market Hamlet, Leicestershire, and intended to look a little after

his senatorial duties. Earl de Gauntlet once had, as everybody acquainted with the polite world knows, a sister, Lady Harriett Morcon, who had made a *mésalliance* with the celebrated West End physician of King William's days, Dr. Latimer, and had been cut off accordingly from any intercommunication with her noble family. She became pious and resigned, and published some very charming little tracts. 'The Scarlet Sinner' and 'The Converted Milkman' produced quite a sensation in their day, and were flatteringly noticed in the 'Morning Post,' after which the de Gauntlet family withdrew their joint subscription from that influential journal, and refused to its accomplished correspondent, Mr. Jenkins, the privilege of occupying a seat beside the porter, in their hall, on the occasion of solemn festivities. Lady Harriett led a weak existence for some years, and having given birth to a son and seen him despatched to Eton, she mildly expired soon after. Which of us indeed will not some day expire? *Cras mīhi!* Seek not to ask the day, Leuconāë, but rather—psha, what is the use of quoting Horace which we have quoted so often before, and preaching the sermon which perhaps has been expounded a few times already? Opposite my window, as I write, is a hatchment. Across the stately square (in which I live) I can see its sable and gold through the trees of the garden in the centre. In that garden are two youthful forms which unwearingly pace up and down the gravel walk. They gaze into each other's eyes as I can tell even when only their loving backs are turned upon me. I know the old story they are whispering, although the organ of the Italian meanwhile grinds through the square and the butcher's boy whistles his longing for the company of Nancy as his heavy booteels clamp along the pavement. Why not whisper the old story, my dear Miss Hartshorn? Have we not all in our own day thus whispered? *Ich auch*—nay, *tu quoque*. Have you forgotten already that you too were once young and had ringlets whose roots were

set in your own scalp, and eyes which needed not the protecting lustre of a Callaghan's double eye-glass? Yes, they whisper of love, and the hatchment above them preaches of death. The old story and the old sermon. Yesterday we made love and were young; we wore our bridal robes and we rivalled their whiteness; our locks were encircled with the orange-blossom, and our hearts throbbed beneath our elaborate shirt-front; we were given away at St. George's Church (Hanover Square, not in the East), and our marriage in high life was recorded in the fashionable columns. To-morrow they put up the hatchment over our door—that is, if we belong to the British nobility. What matters it after all? The undertaker must live as well as the bride-cake maker, and, good gracious, what would some of us do if we had not love and death to moralise over?

So the gentle Lady Harriett passed mildly out of existence. Dr. Latimer consoled himself, and, having once married for love, next time married for money. He espoused Mary Anne, widow of the late Clement Bogus, Esq., of Framp and Bogus, Manchester warehousemen, Paul's Chain, City. Mrs. Bogus was a lady who had passed the heyday of youth (her female friends saids he was fifty), and entertained somewhat aggressive dissenting opinions in religious matters. Indeed, she is the step-sister of the eminent and popular preacher, the Reverend Hiram Bellows, of the Chapel of the Covenant, Surrey. It was this marriage and this connection which led to the unfortunate differences in the Latimer family, and the breaking-off of diplomatic relations between Philip Latimer, Esq., of the Inner Temple, and his revered stepmother, which event finally led to a rupture between that impulsive young man and his newly-married father.

‘It's all very fine, my good people,’ Mr. Philip would say in debate with some of his counselling friends, ‘to talk of patience and self-control. I can't stand Bellows, and I

won't go to the Chapel of the Covenant. I went there once and I fell asleep, until the fellow woke me up, by Jove ! with his confounded roaring about the Pope and the Scarlet Woman. I believe I swore—just under the very ears of *ma belle-mère*. I can't stand Bellows at dinner, and I'm sick of the religious conversation and the anecdotes of converted old washerwomen. My father may stand it if he likes—indeed, I believe he can't help it now. But I've had enough of it. Rather will I seek out some wild retreat deep in yonder shining Orient where my life began to beat. Emma, my dusky helper, please to bring me another bottle of the liquid which in Europe we call Bass's bitter and a fresh screw of tobacco.' For Philip was thus addressing a circle of his peers in the smoking-room of the Bird of Night, the resort of himself and his literary and artistic friends at the hours when club-rooms began to grow slow, and the *salons* and *boudoirs* of the West were voted a bore.

Philip occupied a suite of apartments two flights up in Pounce Buildings, Parchment Court, Inner Temple. Below him was the den of Bluebag, the eminent Q.C., who was believed to be making his twelve thousand a year, and who could not spare time to enter the House and become Attorney-General (his views were Conservative), or to go on the bench and become Chief Justice. Immediately above him was The O'Cruiskeen Lawn, the gallant young Irish chieftain, who represented the borough of Bally-blunderbuss in Parliament, and who avenged the wrongs of his race upon the bloodthirsty Saxon by inflicting vicarious punishment on the Saxon tailors, bill-discounters, and boot-makers. Philip had just been called, and had given his call-dinner in very magnificent style when the little events occurred (needless to detail) which led to the untoward rupture between himself and his elder relatives.

Philip's friends were rather uneasy on his account. The young fellow had been brought up to wealth, present

and prospective. He had evinced at college an extraordinary faculty for the acquirement of expensive habits. His prints, his books, his horses, his boats, his wine-parties were the wonder of his Hall. Margot, the wine merchant, capped to him as if he were a don. Even Lord Bagshott (son of Earl Hounslow and Lady Mary Wimbledon, now Countess Hounslow) paled in magnificence before the physician's son. 'Gad, sir,' the frank young nobleman would say, 'I don't quite know what to make of our friend "Gallipots"—which was his lordship's cheerful way of alluding to Philip's paternal connection with the faculty of medicine—'he has twice as many parties and twice as many horses as I have; and the doosid wonder of it all is that he pays for everything, which, egad, you know, I don't.' As, indeed, his lordship's tradespeople were forced to admit that he did not.

Now, after this sort of life, how was our young friend to settle down in two-storey-high chambers of the Inner Temple and wait in hunger until clients came? His friends worked for him and intrigued for him, and actually once got an attorney (Grab, of Grab, Clutch, and Co., Chancery Lane) to send him a brief in the celebrated case of Sprouts against Radish, action for slander by the wife of the defendant upon the wife of the plaintiff. But Mr. Philip, choosing to think the defendant in the wrong, actually told Grab it was a shame to go into court with such a case. 'Actually told me so to my own face, sir,' Mr. Grab subsequently stated when narrating the story—'told me it was a confounded shame, and that it was slander upon the plaintiff's wife, and that our client was a catamaran and ought to be ashamed of herself. As if it mattered to us, sir, to *us*, whether she was right or wrong, catamaran or no catamaran, so long as she paid our bill. I told him so, sir, as quietly as I say it to you, and hang me if the fellow didn't fly into a passion and as good as call me names. He'll never do for the bar, and it's my

belief he'd better turn literary man, or crossing-sweeper, or something of that kind.'

Clearly our young friend was not made to adorn a woolsack. His friends candidly told him as much, and he assented with his wonted magnificence of self-recognition. But there was something in the hint dropped by Mr. Grab which struck us all. Why not turn literary, or, as Mr. Grab phrased it, literary man? Philip's prize poem at college, 'Deucalion and Pyrrha,' had been much admired among us all when read aloud by the author at one of his famous wine-parties. I am not quite sure that I listened to any of it at the time, but I know I thought it very fine. Therefore it was arranged that Mr. Philip had a natural genius for literature, and should be provided, somehow, with an engagement on the press.

It was while his friends were engaged in endeavouring to promote the fortunes of Philip—who was all the time rocking himself in an American chair at the window of his Temple apartments, smoking his great pipe and pulling his finely developed flame-coloured moustache—that the event took place which was preluded by us at the opening of this chapter. One day a stately barouche drew up at the principal entrance of Pounce Buildings, Parchment Court, Inner Temple. The youthful O'Cruiskeen Lawn, just entering the precincts, looked eagerly round and wreathed his features into a fascinating smile, expecting to see the carriage lined with pink bonnets and silk flounces. He was disappointed and turned away disconcerted. 'Hwho's the ould divil, I wondher?' mentally ejaculated the chieftain as he mounted the dark and narrow stairs which led to his noble abode. Bluebag, the eminent counsel, looked over his dingy blind as the carriage wheels stopped. 'The Earl de Gauntlet, by Jove,' he growled. 'What does he want here? Why doesn't he call on *me*? Perhaps if I look out he'll salute me.'

But the Earl de Gauntlet—for it was that nobleman—

did not salute Bluebag, Q.C. He despatched his servant Tags upstairs to the den of Mr. Philip Latimer, entrusted with a card (blazoned with the ancestral crest, three steel gloves clasping respective battleaxes) and a request that the young gentleman would be good enough to step downstairs, as his lordship's noble gout did not permit him to ascend.

I don't say that Philip actually swore when he saw the crested card, but he certainly did not comport himself as the true Briton generally does when he receives an unexpected visit from a member of the aristocracy. What would you have done, Brown, my boy? You would have looked out your peerage and ascertained precisely who was the Earl's father, and whether he had any sons, and which of them was in Parliament and which in the army, and who were his sisters or daughters, and who married them, and so forth, in order that you might not run the risk of seeming unfamiliar with the whole family history of one so grand and noble. And you, my dear Mrs. Jones, would no doubt have taken care that his lordship's card always (by the merest chance of course) found itself uppermost in the card-basket for years and years afterwards, long, indeed, after his lordship had ceased to think any more of your Mr. Jones than he did of Tom or Paul or Davy who bear the same cognomen. But Philip did nothing of the kind. Perhaps we ought to make excuses for him. He was an eccentric and, indeed, an untrained young man, whose education had been neglected in those important branches. Moreover his mother died young and he had not had that admirable instruction in respect for rank and aristocratic virtues which you, my dear madam, so carefully bestow upon your genteel offspring. Therefore, I am afraid Philip only grumbled out, 'What can that old savage want of me?' and flung the card with utter heedlessness upon his ricketty table, where, indeed, finding it by chance some hours after, and it being of the thinnest and most arist-

cratic pasteboard, he used it, I regret to say, to light that great pipe from which he was perpetually puffing the circling vapour of the grateful nicotine. But for the present, I admit that he condescended so far as to come down the stairs and issue forth upon the open court from which to the left might be caught a glimpse of the quiet Temple Gardens and the shining river beyond.

‘I believe you’re my nephew—how d’ye do?’ was the affectionate address of his lordship.

‘I believe I am—pretty well, thank you,’ was the grateful reply of Mr. Philip.

‘You’re like your mother,’ growled the peer, ‘she was a fool.’

‘I believe I do inherit the family qualities,’ said our youthful Templar, not the least in the world abashed.

The benignant nobleman showed his teeth in a grin.

‘I hear you’ve quarrelled with your father,’ he said, ‘because he married the old widow of some tallow-chandler or pork-butcher or somebody of that kind. Like you all the better for it. Come and see me—Gauntlet House, Garter Square—dare say you know it.’

‘Dare say a hansom will find it,’ rejoined Philip. ‘When shall I come?’

The peer laughed again. ‘You’re a queer fellow, I think,’ he said. ‘I rather like you. Come whenever you please. Good morning.’

The coroneted carriage turned and drove away. Bluebag dived beneath his blind again, and O’Cruiskeen Lawn shut down his window.

So Philip became a frequent and apparently a welcome visitor at Gauntlet House, Garter Square, during the season, and his friends looked upon it that his fortune was clearly made. Earl de Gauntlet never had married, and seemed scarcely likely to enter the holy bonds now. He had been wild in his youth, people said; and not very tame even in his old age, added more malicious individuals

(Radicals, Chartists, and Red Republicans, no doubt) ; and he was fond, it was hinted, even still of little entertainments at Greenwich in the company of Mesdemoiselles Fifine and Clotilde and other young ladies connected with the ballet. I don't say that Mr. Philip behaved himself in very conciliating style at the banquets to which he was invited—and to which, let us hasten to say, Mesdemoiselles Fifine and Clotilde were not present. But he sometimes scoffed openly at Captain Marker, his lordship's toady in chief ; he insisted that the French cavalry were the finest in the world, under the very whiskers and ears of General Sir George Bang himself ; he yawned and ejaculated 'Bosh' while Cataracts, the famous Egyptian traveller, was recounting some of his recent adventures ; and he praised 'Essays and Reviews' without the slightest regard for the feelings of his lordship the Right Rev. Bishop of Slowborough. When the venison was praised he roared out that he preferred a peculiar Welsh mutton at an eight-penny dining-house in Bucklersbury ; and he made wry faces at his lordship's most delicious Clicquot, affirming, in the first place, that it wasn't good, and in the next that, even if it were, he would infinitely prefer a glass of Disher's ale. I don't say that Philip made himself very agreeable to the company generally ; but my lord seemed somehow to like him, laughed at his rudeness, and appeared to be amused by his eccentricities ; and therefore if the rest of the company did not much admire him they had the good sense to make a sacrifice of their feelings.

Now it was at some of these little *réunions* in Gauntlet House, Garter Square, that Philip made the acquaintance of Blatters, the proprietor of the 'Mayfair Weekly Gazette and Carlton Register,' a very powerful journal, devoted to the interests of Church and State, which has since left Church and State to care for their own interests, and has closed its valuable career in Basinghall Street. Blatters esteemed it the very crown and triumph of his political

career to sit at the table of the Earl de Gauntlet, and he was naturally much struck with the eloquence and talents of the Earl de Gauntlet's nephew. Perhaps it had been partly the earl's object that Mr. Blatters should be thus impressed, for he was one of those not uncommon individuals who like to serve a friend at the expense of somebody else. The result was that Mr. Blatters secured the services of Philip at a weekly stipend to contribute political literary and other articles to the columns of the 'Mayfair Weekly Gazette'; and presently the correspondent of that journal, at the capital of a certain Continental potentate, happening to fall sick and require change, our friend Philip was requested and consented to occupy his place for a few months until his restoration.

It was from this capital that one of his friends received an amazing number of private epistles from Mr. Philip, the principal contents of which it would be needless to offer to the public. But there are some passages for which we must absolutely find room.

'I saw her again last night. It was at the ball given by the French Ambassador, the Marquis Paillasse. She looked lovelier than ever. By Heavens, sir, I adore her. I walk about my room at night roaring out her name. The servants think me a lunatic—indeed one of them told me he had always known that all Englishmen were so. I never saw anyone with such eyes. I don't mean the servant of course, I mean Lucilia! Why may I not call her Lucilia? Don't we call the stars by their names, although they don't shine upon us alone, and although they won't condescend to come down and light a fellow's lonely cigar for him? Yes, I call her Lucilia. I carved her name on the porcelain stove. (Why the deuce don't these people have fireplaces?) And I had of course to scratch all the letters out again; and I dare say they'll make up a bill of a few thousand thalers for the damage. If I don't see her every night I go half mad—and if I do

see her I go half mad all the same. I make a toady of myself for her sake, I do ; ko-too to all sorts of flunkey old Chamberlains and confounded snuffy old Field Marshals to get cards of invitations for balls where I may have the chance of meeting her. And what do I get for all this ? Sometimes only a bow and a smile. Oh such a smile, so sweet, and by Jove, do you know, so sad too. Do you remember Preraphael's Ariadne ? Do you remember the eyes and the expression ? I didn't believe in Preraphael before. I do now. She has the eyes of that Ariadne. I mean Lucilia. Heavens, how madly in love I am—and what an ass I am.'

Perhaps Philip's friends did not always dissent from the latter conclusion. But there was a postscript to this letter which we had better print.

'P.S.—I can't quite make out her mother—Lucilia's mother—Mrs. Palegrave. She's a very handsome and still very young woman. She's immensely clever and brilliant. Knows everything, has been everywhere, and fascinates every one. But still there's something about her I can't quite make out. And some of the fellows here tell absurd stories. Pump, of the English Legation, says she must be seventy years old, although she scarcely looks forty ; and Della Crusca, of the Sardinian Office, swears she told him she knew Count Somebody who has been dead these eighty years. But I don't mind all their confounded nonsense.'

Again Philip writes : 'I am more and more in love with her. She is the sweetest and saddest of beings. I look at her and tremble for her health. I hang about her all the evening. I glare and swear to myself when any of the swells approach her. When young Millefleurs, of the French Embassy, or Von Reichsrath, the stuck-up Austrian, or even Rappahannock Stripes, the confounded Virginian planter, who owns ever so many millions of slaves, gets to dance with her, I think she would rather dance with me,

only I am such a frightful waltzer. But I know she doesn't care about a fellow like me—and her mother, oh! I am quite certain that woman hates me. She eyes me with a queer smile which I cannot comprehend. I lie awake at night and dream of her. I don't mean of Mrs. Palegrave, although she, too, is in my thoughts, but of her daughter. Potts says Mrs. Palegrave is a siren, and that she was one of the lot who sang to Odysseus. If I told you what a queer dream I had about her last night—for I'm not such an idiot as to think it was anything *but* a dream—I know you would laugh at me, and therefore I shan't tell you. But I tell you what, old fellow, I begin to think there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in Martin Tupper's philosophy.'

It is very probable that the confidential friend of Mr. Philip did not pay much attention to the outpourings of this ardent love. Perhaps we had known of Philip having been in love before, having suffered, survived, and got quite well again. We had heard the ravings which were given to the now-forgotten Rosalind, and were therefore not inclined to pay much attention to the new outbursts over the freshly-discovered Juliet. But when Philip returned (which he did not long after) to his London life again (the rightful occupant of the correspondent's chair having recovered), we could not but own among ourselves that there really appeared something in this latest attachment which had impressed itself not merely upon our poor friend's heart, but upon his face and manner as well.

'Hear from her?' he grumbled in reply to some indirect inquiry, 'no, I don't hear from her. Why should she write to me? She doesn't care that about me,' and he flung the blazing stump of his cigar into the Thames. 'She's too good for me. I'm only afraid she's too good for the world altogether. She has a siren for a mother, but that's no fault of hers. If I were a painter I would immortalise her on canvas, by Jove; she should be my

Fornarina. If I were a poet she should be my Beatrice. But then I'm not. Why can't I be a painter? Why can't I be a poet? Why can't I do anything to deserve her thinking about me? Come to the Bird of Night, sir, and we'll drown our cares in the flowing bowl.'

And to the Bird of Night we went accordingly, where, under the agreeable stimulant of pale ale and tobacco, Mr. Philip recounted for about the fiftieth time since his return the whole story of his love, of its object (so far as he knew it), and of the disappearance of the girl and her mother from the city wherein he had been a temporary sojourner; all which circumstances, let it be owned, did not seem to Philip's friend at the time either thrillingly interesting or peculiarly surprising. That he had fallen deeply in love with a pretty and somewhat delicate girl: that the mother was not over much inclined to encourage such a penniless suitor: that having sojourned as long as they pleased in a foreign city, mother and daughter should leave it when they thought fit—all these remarkable facts, deeply interesting to the persons actually engaged, scarcely occurred to anybody else as fraught with peculiar wonder. Who, indeed, does wonder at anything which affects his friends—except, perhaps, how those friends manage to live and keep up appearances? I should like to know how the deuce Thompson manages to give those dinners and keep that brougham; and I believe my wife has sometimes expressed a pardonable curiosity to ascertain where on earth Mrs. Robinson contrives to get her perpetual new bonnets; but as to how Thompson met and wooed the present Mrs. T., or whether Mr. Robinson was originally favoured in his suit by the mother of Mrs. R., these questions, I give you my honour and word, do not strike me as in the slightest degree subjects for wonder, curiosity, or interest.

Meanwhile Philip laboured in the editorial and literary columns of the 'Mayfair Gazette.' Blatters was, for a

while, very much delighted with his new contributor. That was Philip's review of Professor Monad's elaborate work (ten volumes quarto) upon the Origin of Man, the object whereof was to demonstrate that men were originally cabbage roots; and which important theory Philip demolished in two columns, got up with the aid of 'Joyce's Scientific Dialogues' and the 'Penny Cyclopædia.' That was our friend's exposition of the state of parties and politics all over Europe which at the time attracted so much attention among the author's immediate friends, and which read to the British Ministry some lessons upon the dangerous schemes of certain foreign Cabinets, by which wise Government, as the article itself declared, 'would do well to profit 'ere the opportunity had been lost for ever.' This article, it was fully expected, would have called forth some notice from the Prime Minister of the day, and would have given occasion for an important debate in Parliament. I think, however, if my memory serves me rightly, the article in question did not call forth any such notice or give occasion to the expected debate. Those, too, were Philip's poems 'To Lucilia' which appeared so frequently in the columns of the 'Mayfair Gazette'; until at last a malignantly facetious contemporary showed them up in a hideous piece of jocular criticism; and then Blatters positively declined to insert any more of our young friend's poetic outpourings.

But there clearly was some sort of change coming over our poor young friend. At the Bird of Night he used to sit glum and mute. He ceased to confide the story of his love or loves. He never went near his uncle, although, of course, we, his prudent friends, recommended him to stick closely to Earl de Gauntlet under all circumstances. 'I haven't a genius for doing toady,' Philip would moodily rejoin. 'It may suit Captain Marker, but it isn't in my line.' To his most intimate associates he was a little—a very little—more communicative. 'There's something

astray with me, old fellow,' he once replied to his narrator. ' "I have dreams, sir, dreams," as somebody says in Shakespeare, or something like that at all events. You would think me an idiot if I were to tell you, and so I won't. You're a practical man, and a man of the world—worldly, and you only believe in two and two making four, and in a house in Belgravia being necessary to human existence. I believe in something more than all that now. Do you know that I went yesterday to visit Mr. Foster, the medium, to see if he could enlighten me, and he couldn't. I wanted to know if—if *Lucilia* is dead, and I wrote her name, and he said she was dead—"the party," he said—and that the spirit answered. But when I asked to have the name written down he showed his arm with the word "John" in red letters on it, and I came away rather abruptly, and after making some remarks which I believe were not complimentary. To-morrow I'm going to try another medium. I dare say it will come to much the same thing.'

But the very next morning I met Philip at an early hour. He rushed towards me with impetuosity and wildness in his eyes. ' Give me joy, old fellow,' he said ; ' she's alive, and I am to see her to-night.'

' To-night ? Why, how have you come to know of her ? Is she in London ? Have you heard from her ? '

' No ; but I am to see her to-night. Don't ask me anything more. There are intelligences which you men of the world cannot fathom. I am to see her to-night at twelve o'clock.'

' At twelve o'clock ? And where ? '

' Oh, now don't laugh, for there's no fun in the matter —on Southwark Bridge.'

Must the narrator own that he did hee-haw loudly at this announcement ? ' Oh, Philip, you baby,' I replied, ' don't you know that the moment twelve strikes to-night it will be followed by the First of April—All Fools' day ? '

' Stuff, sir,' was the angry reply, ' I hate people who

believe nothing'; I'd as soon be an Atheist as such a person.' And our friend bounced away in mighty fuss and indignation.

Poor Philip! Who was making an April fool of the lad? *Eheu!* what April comes about that some such lad is not being made a fool? Youth is all a prolonged First of April. Some of us indeed are fools in our December and our January, without having the fun of the month of buds and blossoms around us. Ah, folly to be wise indeed. As I write this I look out, and behold (this being the very First of April), I see a trim servant wench, smart in her new bonnet and swelling hoop, come daintily along the square. She tosses her neat head, and like the sprightly Silvia hopes she does not toss unseen. She does not know that the rough hand of yonder butcher boy has pinned a long paper tail to her jaunty skirt. The butcher boy laughs, but she passes on unheeding. Perhaps I too would have laughed at first. Wherefore laugh? Who indeed drags not his tail? You who read, and I who write, are we even not the April fools of something or somebody, only that we are less happy in our unconscious folly than yonder smiling servant lass? You, my respected brother, so wise in your own conceit, do not all your neighbours clearly see and freely canvass the mark of folly which has been chalked upon your back? My dear Mrs. Grimwig, I have heard all about that little affair of yours, indeed only yesterday your bosom friend Miss Earwig revived the whole story for me, and I know that there was a time when, old and stiff as you look now, you were pleasant and pretty, and in the eyes of your female neighbours very foolish. Ah, let us envy Philip as he hurries upon his errand of folly, although it guide him to Southwark Bridge, a cheerless passage. Errands of greater folly bring people to bridges sometimes, I have heard and read. Let us be glad that at least if he be a Fool he goes upon a pleasant fool's errand, and that the bells in his cap ring merrily on the way.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE MISERABLE.

TOWARDS the close of the autumn of the year 1859, there walked slowly through the streets of the little French hamlet of N—— on the N—— a man.

He walked slowly. He was tired, travel-stained, dusty. He carried a stick. On it there was a bundle.

The evening shadows were descending, the little children, angels released a while on a ticket-of-leave from the skies, were straggling, tired of play, to their homes. The bird on the wing was weary and sought his nest. The dog was tired of his chase and crept to his kennel. The cock, the bumble-bee, the ox, and the spider, were all weary and betook themselves to shelter and repose.

The man was tired.

But he had no shelter. He had no home, no nest, no kennel, no roost, no hive, no stall, no web. Society, which provides even for the cockroach and the rat, had found no place for him.

Stay !

For the cockroach Society has the vermin powder. For the rat it has the trap. Thus too it provided for Pierre Valpierre. It fed his youth upon vermin powder. It sheltered his manhood in the trap.

Night and atrophy are the attributes of modern civilisation. Man in his higher form strives after light and ventures himself upon etherealism. Rob him of the light and he grows to be of the darkness. Darkness is in his face and in his soul. He drinks midnight, and he thinks tenebrosity. Realities become to him a phantom, and phantoms transfigure themselves into realities. Lividness absorbs the celestial and the cerulear phantasmagorias pass before his blinded eyes. All humanity arises in him,

and raves madly in the desert of his heart. Expel the dog from society and you have the wolf. Banish the cat from the warm hearth and you generate the tiger.

Thus was it with Pierre Valpierre.

His youth was unfortunate. What is youth ?

Youth is the spring, the bloom, the blossom, the running brook, the thistledown, the linnet, the star, the cowslip of life. Thus at least was it meant to be. But society intervenes. Society says to the spring, 'Thou must labour for the harvest.' Society says to the blossom, 'toil for the fruit,' to the brook, 'turn the mill,' to the thistledown, 'indicate how the wind blows,' to the linnet, 'enter thy cage and draw thy own water,' to the star, 'become a farthing candle for a dull humanity,' to the cowslip, 'dissolve thyself into a draught for the voluptuous world.' What wonder if the spring has its fierce storms and passionate showers of rebellion, if the blossom snaps itself away and buries its face in the mud, if the brook bursts its bounds and becomes the torrent, if the thistle puts forth its avenging sting, if the linnet dashes itself against the bars of its prison, if the star transforms itself into a fiery comet, if the cowslip becomes a poisonous fungus ?

Thus it was with Pierre Valpierre,

He was once young ; society said to him 'work.' He set his teeth and replied, 'I will not.'

Fearful struggle between the million and the unit ; between the crowd and the individual ; between the mass and the atom ! Gloomy struggle going on around in all our lives, but which we regard not. Who shall win ? On the day when that great battle is closed in peace, the mystery of existence will be solved. The struggle will be over between darkness and light.

Now all darkness ! Then all light !

Pierre Valpierre, the unit, the individual, the atom, struggled with the million, the crowd, the mass. He said,

‘ I will not work : why should society bid me be a slave ?  
Am not I a man and a brother ? ’

He did not work. He struggled, but the struggle was short. The million conquered.

Pierre Valpierre was thrown into a prison.

He would not work. He claimed his natural right—right inalienable by any social fictions invented by aristocracy and supported by despotism ; his right to a share of society’s wealth and society’s ease. He claimed his right and society denied it. He asserted his claim by deeds. Close to his mother’s dwelling was the house of an aristocrat : a banker ; a maire ; a man with the face of an owl ; a magistrate. He had money ; Pierre Valpierre had none.

Pierre Valpierre entered the dwelling of the banker and took some of his gold.

Society arose and crushed Pierre Valpierre.

They called him a robber, and sentenced him to the hulks. He went into the dungeons a mastiff ; he came out a wolf. He entered a cat ; he emerged a tiger.

Originally he was sentenced to a year’s imprisonment, but he was a strong man, panting for freedom, and he broke his gaoler’s head.

A new incarceration. Five years.

He escaped at the close of the fourth year, carrying away the watch and purse of the gaol chaplain, and leaving behind him his clasp knife in the ribs of the warden.

Society again pursued him, and he was captured.

Fifteen years of penal servitude.

He came out at the close of that period a wolf, a tiger. He looked for his early friends. They were gone. Where are the flower wreaths of last July ? What are the bubbles of yesterday’s stream ?

Pierre Valpierre’s friends were swallowed up by society in her gaols and hulks and convict settlements.

Pierre Valpierre tramped at evening through the village of N—— on the N——. He asked for shelter and he was

refused. They asked if he could pay. He refused to pay and they repulsed him. They repulsed him from the village hotel, now called 'The Victory of Solferino.' Then this hostelry was 'The Duke of Malakoff;' shortly before that 'The Emperor's Arms;' previously to that 'The Lamartine,' and not long before 'The Prince de Joinville.' In Pierre Valpierre's early days it was 'The Charles X.'

They drove Valpierre from the door.

He knocked at the cottager's door. The cottager was still afield. His wife came out; a baby at her breast. Pierre Valpierre had no wife and no baby.

Pierre Valpierre said fiercely, 'Let me in; I must sup here and sleep here.'

The terrified female clasped her baby, and shut the door in Pierre Valpierre's face.

Oh, society! It is thus thou drivest thy children into a perpetual war with thee!

Pierre Valpierre smote and kicked at the door. The inhospitable female would not open. He gazed wildly at the stars which were beginning to twinkle in the evening sky, and passed on his way.

At the upper end of the village lived the Curé. The Curé was sitting to his evening meal. Two partridges (roasted) were on the board. A modest flask of Macon stood by. The Curé's housekeeper waited on the priest. The house door stood open.

Pierre Valpierre entered, strode into the Curé's room, seized one partridge from the dish and devoured it in two bites. He uncorked the flask of Macon and drained it to the dregs. Then turning to the Curé, he said:

'I am a robber and a convict. I am hungry and thirsty. I won't work and I won't pay. I mean to sup and sleep here. I hate priests, and I rob them when I can.'

The Curé smiled mildly and said:

‘Honour me by accepting the arm-chair. Marguerite, let three more partridges be roasted, and fetch the sparkling burgundy. Have clean sheets put in the best bedroom and light the wax candles in the silver branches. This gentleman is so condescending as to honour us by supping and sleeping here to-night.’

The housekeeper departed and executed the order.

Valpierre supped on partridges and drank sparkling burgundy. The Curé and the housekeeper waited on him.

He had never before slept in such a bed. But after a few hours of unwonted comfort he arose. He remembered the wrongs he had suffered from society, and reflected that these must be avenged. He therefore wrapped up the plate and candlesticks in the clean sheets, hung the bundle on his stick, and left the house. As he passed the room of the Curé, he saw that the door of the good man was unsuspectingly open, and that the benefactor slept tranquilly. A scruple crossed Pierre Valpierre’s mind. He doubted whether he was justified in suffering society to escape in the person of the priest. Ought he not to enter and slay the sleeper? Fearing to make too much noise, he renounced his intention. He contented himself with entering and carrying off his benefactor’s watch and waistcoat. Then he departed.

Next day the minions of a despotic government and an aristocratic system brought him back to the Curé’s house in custody. They had recognised the waistcoat and the watch.

‘I rejoice to see you, my beloved friend,’ said the Curé; ‘I was about to send after you. In taking the watch and waistcoat you forgot the chain and the pantaloons which are equally your property.’ And he tendered the golden links and the garment to the astonished Valpierre.

One gendarme fainted with surprise.

The other, a man of calmer mood, bore his comrade away.

Pierre Valpierre dropped upon his knees. The pantaloons fell from his trembling hand. He knelt down a tiger ; he rose up a lamb !

Years passed away.

The battle of Solferino was fought.

Battle of giants ! Warring of Titans ! Struggle of thunderbolts ! Collision of worlds !

All the world knows the phases of that battle—troublous, uncertain, hesitating, menacing.

It was not a battle ; it was an antagonism.

On the one side warred the old principle of Divine right and monarchical congresses. On the other the new principle of nationality and popular choice. On the side of Austria a superstition. On the side of France an idea !

That idea was expressed in the breath of rifled cannon and in the charges of French cuirassiers ; terrible, grand, sublime, grotesque ; the earth shaking ; the rivers running backward ; the clouds bursting ; the lightning flashing ; sabres crossing sabres : cannons vomiting their flame ; the ranks of France confounded with the ranks of Austria ; the blue mingling with the white ; the steel entering the stomach ; the bullet blowing out the brains ; horses upset ; men crushed ; squadrons charging ; battalions trampled ; generals shouting ; smoke bursting ; the cuirassier writhing in his death agony, still a hero, a giant, a Titan, expiring with the shout of France and victory on his lips ; the Uhlan crying for quarter ; the Viennese returning to the charge ; the Venetian falling on his own sword ; the Sardinian recognizing a countryman in the ranks of the foe ; all the earth steaming with red ; all the heaven darkened with smoke ; all the hill tops veiled in vapour ; all the iron mouths pouring forth flame, carnage, destruction, death !

All for an idea.

Sublime effort of modern chivalry ! Immense utterance

of French enthusiasm ! On the plain of Solferino France buried an old world and baptised a new !

What has this to do with our story ?

Nothing.

Let us, therefore, proceed.

The town of D—— is not anywhere near the scene of Solferino. Hence the connection of ideas.

In the year 1860 the town of D—— was a watering-place much frequented by the aristocracy of foreign lands. It has a sea and a strand ; it also has mineral springs. In 1860 it had had for some time a new and special attraction. It had M. Maladine, the maire.

The fame of M. Maladine had pervaded all France. His philanthropy, his charity, his public spirit, his good works had made him renowned in his own despite. Summoned to Paris, he had had the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour presented to him by the hands of the Emperor. Invited to accept a seat in the Senate, he had modestly but firmly declined.

M. Maladine had come to D—— a poor man and a stranger. In two years he was a millionaire, and the friend, patron, father of the community. Every industry he founded there prospered. His manufactories crowned every hill ; his charitable institutions filled every street. He found D—— a poor place, living on the summer contributions of capricious visitors ; he made it thriving, energetic, independent, prosperous. Strange power of a single human character !

Who knew anything of M. Maladine's antecedents ?

No one.

Who asked aught concerning them ?

While he was poor and while he was rising, many, openly.

When he was rich and powerful, many, in secret.

When he had proved himself noble, pious, charitable, munificent, the inquiries ceased ; partly because the innate

respect for virtue stayed them ; partly, too, because nobody could answer them.

M. Maladine walked one day upon the road which winds around the cliff overhanging the sea. Crowds of people promenaded there, too.

Suddenly a cry of alarm and horror was raised.

An English *caleche* containing two ladies, one of whom held the reins, had several times passed and repassed M. Maladine. Both ladies were beautiful, but they were not of equal age. The elder had looked with interest on the beloved maire, to whom every passer raised his hat.

It was for these ladies and this *caleche* that the cry of alarm arose.

The spirited horses had broken away, dashed wildly along the road, scattering the affrighted and shrieking spectators, and plunging madly towards the edge of the cliff.

One moment more, and they are lost for ever ! No human hand seemed capable of saving them. The spectators fell upon their knees and watched with starting eyes the awful scene.

M. Maladine looked round and saw it.

With one bound he reached the edge of the cliff and stood just between the maddened horses and destruction. But what can a single being do ? Can one man restrain two furious horses, already in the spring which must hurl them and their owners into destruction ? Could Hercules, could Atlas, resist their force ?

M. Maladine seized the horses' heads, and, straining against them with breast and hands, he held them back. It was as though they strove against a wall of brass.

One wild cheer of delight burst from the crowd !

Moment of sublime heroism and of disinterested admiration !

Then a hundred arms were ready to seize, restrain, and lead away the horses. M. Maladine was pale, but firm,

and not exhausted. There was an expression of sublime calmness, angelic simplicity, upon his face.

The younger of the ladies had fainted. M. Maladine lifted her out in his arms, folding her as tenderly as if she had been an infant, and his own.

He never had an infant. Ha, society!

The elder lady sat calm, but pallid, with livid, gleaming eyes. She thanked M. Maladine, but begged to be allowed to thank him more fully when her daughter had been restored to consciousness.

She spoke in French, with an English accent. M. Maladine spoke all languages: he replied in English.

‘Then you are an Englishman,’ she said—‘a countryman? The perfection of your accent proves it.’

‘Madame,’ he replied, ‘I am a Frenchman, and I never was in England.’

They parted for the moment, as the crowd, pressing around, grew inconvenient.

M. Maladine was walking slowly away.

During the whole scene a man with the eyes of a hyena and the jaws of a wolf had kept his gaze steadily fixed on M. Maladine. A tall man, with an aspect partly expressing unlimited authority, partly denoting unqualified submission.

It was Mouchard, the police-inspector.

He approached M. Maladine, and touched his hat.

‘M. the maire,’ he said, ‘I have never seen any man but one who could perform the feat of strength you have just exhibited.’

‘Indeed,’ replied the maire.

‘And that man,’ continued the inspector, ‘was a convict.’

He gazed fixedly upon M. Maladine. M. Maladine returned the gaze.

‘His name,’ proceeded the inspector, slowly and impressively, ‘was Pierre Valpierre, and he has since escaped from the galleys.’

M. Maladine smiled with a sublime calmness and sweetness. He simply replied, 'Indeed!'

The inspector again touched his hat and slowly walked away.

That night M. Maladine visited the English lady. Her name was Madame Palegrave—her daughter was Lucilia.

Poor M. Maladine—poor Pierre Valpierre—for it was he! He had never before known what love was. The convict has no affections; the wolf indulges not in the tender passion.

Valpierre did not know what the sensation meant which grew up in his heart when he beheld and gazed upon the English miss.

It was evening—a tranquil summer evening. M. Maladine sat in his chamber alone. What passed through the mind of the convict as he gazed upward at the stars faintly beginning to twinkle in the heavens? Did he dream of his lost youth; of his early sufferings; of his immersion in society's fiery furnace; of his marvellous redemption? Did he dream of the English miss? Poor Valpierre, whose heart had up to that moment been compressed by Fate, and from which now at last some soft drops were beginning to flow!

He fell into a kind of dream. Nay, was it a dream?

Around him he thought a faint light was shed. He gazed in imagination upon a female form.

What form was it?

Reader, you have guessed wrongly. It was not the form of the English miss, but the figure of the English mother, pale, livid, anxious, not unsympathetic. She gazed upon him. She called him by his name. That name! The name of the wolf, the name of the tiger! She said, 'Awake, Pierre Valpierre!'

He awoke.

There are moments when all an eternity of emotion is comprehended in a minute—as the form of the sun is

embraced in the dew-drop ; as the whole heaven with its stars is reflected in the water-girl's pail.

Such a moment was that to Pierre Valpierre.

For standing before him was the very form of which he had dreamed.

It was Madame Palegrave. Those who have read this history know what she resembled.

And she called him by his name, and said, ' Awake, Pierre Valpierre ! '

He asked not how she had entered. There are times when we recognise the presence of the impossible and ask no incredulous questions of the supernatural.

' Pierre Valpierre,' she said, ' I have come to save you. Your life, your heart, are no secrets to me. Mouchard, the police inspector, has discovered all. The house is surrounded by his myrmidons. Look here ! '

She threw open the window near.

He shrank back reluctant to expose his form to the hyena eyes below.

' Fear not,' she said, ' no eye beholds you till I so will it. Trust in me and look out.'

He gazed out. Mouchard guarded the carriage door. A gendarme stood at every corner. A dark file of gendarmes was arranged a little way down the street.

He heard the voice of Mouchard—strident, serpent-tone—say :

' Let the door be forced. It's time to put an end to this. We have had enough of the escaped convict passing off for a maire and a public benefactor.'

Valpierre drew back. It is certain that he did not tremble. There was a massive iron safe in the room, supported upon legs of twisted and hammered iron. Valpierre turned his eyes upon it. In a moment he had torn it from its place, upset it, and wrenched one of the massive iron limbs from its place. He poised it in his powerful hand as if it had been a rod. He smiled calmly :

‘I was called Pierre the Steam Hammer at the galleys,’ he said.

That which I am certain of is that Madame Palegrave looked upon him with a glance of admiration.

‘Lay aside your weapon,’ she said, almost tenderly. ‘Here it will avail you nothing--and I can help you to an escape without danger. Pierre Valpierre, do you wish to be redeemed and to live?’

She bent upon the convict a calm but penetrating gaze.

There was a radiant simplicity in his aspect as he returned the steadfast look and answered—‘Now I do.’

‘Then,’ she said, ‘you shall be saved. You shall go forth free and unharmed. You shall lose nothing--not one coin even of the wealth you have earned. Your money has been transferred from the bank of this town. To-morrow present yourself at Laffitte’s of Paris ; tender this note and they will pay you over the full amount of your property—forty-five thousand millions of francs. Secrete it, and save yourself. Before long we meet again.’

Pierre Valpierre was bewildered. He could not articulate a word. When Redemption rushes on the heels of Despair what heart overflows not ?

‘But remember, Pierre Valpierre,’ she whispered in a tone which reached his very soul, ‘I save your life—and I purchase it. It is mine ! Whenever I summon you, you must obey ; whither I point you must go ; what I command that you must do. Say, Valpierre, whom I save from ignominy and death, is your life mine ? ’

He flung himself at her feet.

‘Yours,’ he passionately exclaimed, ‘for ever.’

A wild smile crossed her face. He seized her hand and endeavoured to press it to his lips. She shrank back.

‘Away ! ’ she said. ‘Touch me not ! And now the time has come ! ’

Mouchard had indeed burst in the front door with a

crash. The trampling feet of the gendarmes were heard hurrying up the stairs.

The mysterious woman slowly passed her hand once or twice over the eyes of Pierre Valpierre. His head drooped—he fell senseless.

Mouchard dashed in the door of the chamber. He looked wildly, savagely around. An imprecation burst from his lips.

‘We are foiled !’ he exclaimed, ‘ foiled again. He is gone !’

For the chamber was empty ! Empty save of the police inspector and his followers, and the chairs, the tables, the desk, the broken safe. Otherwise empty. Absolutely empty.

The window was open. Mouchard rushed to it animated by a faint hope. There was no rope ladder—no means of descent of any kind. The wall of the house was as smooth as marble. The descent was some fifty feet.

Moreover, there were half a dozen police spies clustered immediately below.

The room had no other window. It had no chimney.

Mouchard looked from floor to ceiling. ‘Diantre !’ he said, ‘if I live he entered this room half an hour ago, and he has not since gone out.’

‘A la bonne heure, my inspector,’ calmly observed a gendarme, ‘he is not here now, unless he be hidden in a mouse-hole.’

Mouchard made no reply, but proceeded to quit the room. When all his men had left it, he turned back, locked the door, and put the key in his pocket.

‘After all,’ remarked one of the gendarmes in a whisper to another, ‘he grows stupid, that old blunderer of a Mouchard. When one is no longer young, one ought not to be too confident of one’s wits.’

Mouchard heard the remark, but said nothing. He accepted the humiliation. He had laid his plans, and they

had miscarried. He had done all his possible and had failed. 'I thought,' he said to himself between his teeth, 'even the very devil himself could not have snatched him from me this time. And there is no devil.'

Perhaps not. But for all that Pierre Valpierre was gone. Mouchard walked slowly home, conquered.

The house of the late maire was sealed up by the authorities. There was no money found there. The local bank could only announce that all the funds held in the name of M. Maladine had been withdrawn a few days previously.

The very morning following the night we have described a stranger entered Laffitte's bank in Paris immediately after the bureau had opened, and presented an order to withdraw all the funds deposited there a few days before in the name of M. Maladine, of D—. The money was paid over in bank-notes, and the stranger departed. They had not remarked his appearance.

A paragraph found its way into the Paris newspapers announcing that a most extraordinary event had occurred at D—. The maire of that town, who had amassed wealth there, had built all its public institutions, and had received the Cross of the Legion of Honour from Imperial hands, had turned out to be the famous *forçat*, Pierre Valpierre, who had escaped from so many prisons. Mouchard, the celebrated inspector, had with incredible sagacity discovered the real name and character of the impostor; but it had unfortunately happened that just at the very moment when Mouchard felt certain he had the criminal in his grasp, the daring felon had managed to evade the law once more. But Mouchard felt certain that he must be captured before many days. Every avenue of escape was watched, and the telegraph had forwarded a full description all over the country.

Nevertheless many days passed away and the felon was not recaptured.

Mrs. Palegrave, the English lady at D——, expressed great surprise at the singular revelation, and with the characteristic selfishness of her country congratulated herself among her friends that she had not gone too far in encouraging the acquaintance of the unfortunate maire. In a very few weeks she found that the health of her daughter did not improve, and she left the town. She took with her, besides her own and her daughter's female servants, a black male attendant who had not been with her when she first entered the town.

The manufacturing prosperity of the town drooped. Some of its best manufactories became silent and idle. The house of the late maire fell into dirt and ruin. Mouchard left the place and obtained a transferment to Paris. The memory of M. Maladine, the unfortunate Pierre Valpierre, faded into a tradition.

Society, too, has its ruins over which the grass grows and the spiders creep ; its mysteries hang around in the gloom and heavy obscurity ; its caverns and its graves. Society is an enigma. Man is a Sphinx, the poet is the Edipus.

## CHAPTER VI.

### COUNT FOSCOLI, THE EXILE.

IT was a cheerful, balmy spring morning when Count Foscoli, an Italian gentleman residing in Carbonaro Lodge, Geneva Terrace, St. John's Wood, flung open his garden gate and proceeded to walk briskly in the Hyde Park and Tyburnia direction. Count Foscoli was a man much above the middle size, and immensely fat. His fresh, florid, closely-shaven cheeks scarcely gave any indication of his Italian origin. Although nearly sixty years of age he walked with all the jaunty briskness of six-and-twenty.

As he progressed he hummed to himself the touching notes of the 'Stabat Mater,' which occasionally swelled so loudly as to be audible to the passers-by, and sufficed to prove to those who noted the fact that the Count had indeed a magnificent bass voice such as Formes might reasonably have envied. A pretty white lapdog followed the Count, who held his pet by a long pink string, and every now and then halted in his walk to lift the little creature up and tenderly embrace him. It was remarkable that whenever the Count passed any dumb animal, horse, dog, or even donkey in his way he stopped and patted him affectionately. Several times when a nursery-maid bearing a child passed by, the Count insisted upon kissing the infant. He spoke in a peculiarly tender and fondling voice, with but little trace of foreign accent.

'On these beautiful and sunny mornings,' observed the Count, soliloquising, 'I love everything and everybody. Man was made to love all his fellow beings—even those with the long ears, perhaps those especially.' And the Count smiled blandly at his own joke; then resumed the humming of the 'Stabat Mater.'

His walk soon began to lead him through more crowded streets where it was not possible, with convenience at least, to indulge in his tender sympathies for all the animal kingdom. But his bland and benevolent manner remained unchanged. He took off his hat to a crossing-sweeper, bestowed a genial benediction upon an Irish beggar-woman, and helped four successive perambulators over a difficult crossing.

'These little offices of kindness,' observed the Count, 'are really the poetry of life. Nay, are they not the religion? I think they are.' And he hummed a few bars from one of Mozart's immortal masses.

Passing a picture-dealer's shop he saw announced a genuine Titian on exhibition. He stepped casually in, glanced at the picture, pronounced it a copy, and called

the attention of the picture-dealer to a certain mysterious mark in an obscure corner of the back of the canvas which betrayed the fact. The shop was full of spectators, and the Count did not rudely declare his opinions. He merely shook his head when the dealer declared his readiness to maintain the genuineness of the picture, and catching the man's eye at a moment when no one was looking, pointed with an almost imperceptible gesture to the place where the mark might be detected and shrugged his shoulders. The picture-dealer turned pale, and gazed with amazement on the stranger who thus evinced such a knowledge of his profoundest mysteries. The Count smiled a most genial and bewitching smile, bowed profoundly, and walked away.

On his way he stepped into a pastry-cook's shop and bought three rich tarts. With one he fed his little dog, holding the animal in his arms until the rich morsel had been consumed. The second he gave to a poor beggar-boy whom he passed in the street. The third he ate himself with a simple and almost infantile appearance of relish.

Park Lane was reached at last. The Count walked a little way down the aristocratic thoroughfare, and stopped before a splendid mansion which had all the appearance of being only recently redecorated and furnished. Probably the inmates had but just returned from abroad.

The Count pulled out a richly-perfumed handkerchief of the finest cambric and flecked a few almost imperceptible specks of dust off his coat and boots.

'Not too early, I trust,' he murmured with a charming smile upon his full red and white face. 'Can one be too early who comes on such an errand, and whose coming is sure to be so delightful a surprise?'

A gorgeously-attired menial opened the door, to whom the visitor presented with easy dignity a crested and coroneted card. 'For Mrs. Palegrave,' he said in a bland tone. 'Add, if you please, that Count Foscoli will do himself the honour of awaiting her commands.'

He entered the hall, and in a moment was lost in an attentive study of a marble Niobe, which formed one of its principal ornaments.

‘Canova,’ he remarked to himself, ‘but not in his best style. The lines of the shoulder are anatomically imperfect.

The servant re-entered and requested that Count Foscoli would be kind enough to wait a few moments in the library.

The Count entered a magnificent library. He took a couple of volumes from the table. One was in Romaic, the other a book on magic in the Chaldean tongue.

‘Still given to the study of foreign languages and the occult sciences,’ he murmured. ‘This Romaic writer,’ he continued, ‘is incompetent to his task, and, more than that, writes in by no means the best style of his country’s language. *That* expression is ungraceful and scarcely even idiomatic.’ And he laid down the volume.

‘The Chaldean,’ he said, ‘writes well. A fine, clear, and majestic style. I have not lately read anything so simple and eloquent. We of this day do not often write like that. But his science is poor. That experiment, as he describes it, would prove a failure, and would indeed be fallacious if it succeeded.’

He was about to take up another work when the door opened behind him.

Mrs. Palegrave slowly entered. Those who read this story have seen her before. Her face was as usual pale and beautiful. Her eyes gleamed with the melancholy, liquid, almost livid fire which was their light. Perhaps her lip slightly quivered as she passed the threshold, and, looking into the mirror, met for a moment the eyes of the foreign visitor whose back was turned to the door.

The Count turned, and, bowing profoundly, advanced with the blandest smile.

‘I have intruded,’ he said, ‘very early on Madame Palegrave’s privacy. Only arrived in London last night, and behold her coming already discovered and her anxious

friend here ! Need I apologise ? Does the eagerness of friendship require to ask forgiveness ? Then I ask it, and I know I may anticipate your ready and gracious pardon. A chair ! Nay, allow *me* !'

With another polite and profound bow he placed an easy chair, and gracefully pointed to it.

' May I take the liberty ? ' he asked. And without awaiting a reply he drew a second chair, and reposed his immense frame in it with an easy grace which had nothing of actual assurance.

' A charming house,' he went on—' a delightful situation. After fatiguing travel in uncivilised countries how exquisite a change, how refreshing a repose ! And this library filled, as ever, with treasures of literature and science ! I have taken the liberty to glance over some of them. On the whole, I think I may pronounce them worthy of her who studies them.'

' Ugolino Foscoli,' said she whom he addressed, breaking the silence she had kept up to this point, ' why have you come here ? '

' Rather,' said he with a winning smile, ' should you ask how have I come here ? How did I know of your sudden and unexpected return ? Ah, friendship has its marvellous instincts, intuitions, and revelations as well as love. Enough that you have returned and I am here. I might perhaps have expected some kindly intimation of your coming ; another in my place might have complained. But I am not so jealous and exacting. *I* forgive those slight forgetfulnesses.'

' Foscoli,' rejoined the lady, ' the tie that binds us shall be broken.'

He raised his hand in a blandly deprecating manner ; but she proceeded with a scornful impatience—

' I will not have my movements watched and spied. I will not have my footsteps dogged. I am weary of it. I hate you, and you know it.' (He shrugged his shoulders

and gently waved his hand.) ‘ You would be my evil genius if you could. I will yield to you no more. What have I to fear from you ? What have you not to fear from me ? ’

‘ Magic, sorcery, chemistry, toxicology,’ he interrupted in the softest tone and with the sweetest smile. ‘ Lucrezia Borgia, united in one person with the Seeress of Prevorst, and the Witch of Endor ! And yet you see how I, poor inexpert and common man, trust myself in the enchantress’s very cave ! The dove—a plump one indeed—shelters itself in the den of the serpent and is not afraid. Not the least in the world,’ he added with a gentle shrug of his broad shoulders.

‘ Foscoli,’ said Mrs. Palegrave, ‘ you have other foes to dread besides the science at which you vainly scoff. Think of who you are, and what I know. One word to the police, one anonymous line to any member of the band you know of, one open denunciation before a certain Embassy, and I am free of you for ever ! What prevents me from exercising this very ordinary and commonplace power to rid myself of the torment of your presence ? ’

‘ Your exquisite good nature,’ he calmly replied, ‘ your delightful benevolence ; and perhaps, too, your unwillingness to disturb the tranquillity of society, by the hearing of such vexatious and bewildering revelations as, accompanied by names and dates, the doomed exile and patriot might feel it his duty to bequeath to the country of his adoption.’

Suddenly breaking off, he said in a persuasive tone—

‘ May I interrupt this very agreeable conversation by one personal request which I earnestly urge ? My little dog, my Fidelio, my darling pet ! I see by his drooping eye that he yearns for a little nourishment. Dare I use the freedom of an early friend, to entreat for a Naples biscuit soaked in a glass of Madeira ? ’

The lady made a gesture of assent, while her counten-

ance expressed a singular blending of anger, surprise, and disgust.

‘ You are still the same Foscoli ! ’ she remarked, shrugging her shoulders.

‘ You refer to my love for the lower orders of creation ? ’ he blandly said. ‘ Yes, still the same. Who, indeed, could deserve affection like that quiet, loving, contented little creature there ’ (Fidelio meanwhile was whining and snarling with impatience and anger). ‘ I am attentive to him and he repays me with gratitude. I am devoted to others—and they answer me with rebuke and ungratefulness. But Foscoli forgives them all. Does he not, Fidelio, my pretty darling ? Does he not, my wee doggie ? ’

Foscoli sat and fed his dog with the biscuit and Madeira, lavishing on him such endearments as a father might give to a beloved child. He looked up suddenly, the comparison apparently having occurred to his own mind.

‘ I have no child,’ he said, ‘ and I have to make a pet of Fidelio. You, my dear madam, are now, I have heard, somewhat more happy ; how delightful ! How like Sarah, who had a child in her old age ! Not that *you* can be likened to Sarah in appearance at least, for you look rather like a youthful Rachel or Rebecca. But some few years—how many ?—thirty or thirty-five, surely, have passed since the delightful epoch when Madame Palegrave first smiled upon her admiring Foscoli. Then Madame Palegrave looked—well, looked exactly as she does now—and I—I certainly seemed younger then ! Why I might pass very becomingly at present for the venerable papa of the beautiful widow with the young and charming daughter. A capital idea ! I should much like to put it in practice. Should you ? ’

Evidently some thought flashed across Madame Palegrave’s mind, suggested by these words from her strange visitor. She arose and assumed a determined manner.

‘Foscoli,’ she demanded, ‘tell me at once and plainly the purport of your coming here. What do you want?’

‘Can you ask?’ he said. ‘The delight of seeing an old—well, a young and valued friend, one whose name is inseparably linked with the brightest memories of Foscoli’s early youth, and his promising but perhaps not exactly performing manhood. How many of your old adorers are now left? surely none but Foscoli. There was indeed, I have heard, one other, poor old Marley! Yes, I have heard all that story! He recognised you and by a remarkable coincidence he died the same night! Strange but not unheard-of coincidence! The career of Madame Palegrave has had, I believe, many such! How if the devoted Foscoli immediately after recognising his early friend should dwindle, peak, and pine, as your noble bard has expressed it? But Foscoli surely has many years to run before he arrives at the Marley stage of maturity. Marley, I think, had been a long discarded and forgotten lover, many years before Foscoli approached the dangerous flame; besides Foscoli has far too much delicacy of feeling to call up old reminiscences before company, unless very, very much excited by ingratitude or neglect.’

‘Foscoli,’ said Mrs. Palegrave, ‘you know how I hate you.’

‘Superior to your sex in most things,’ he interjected, ‘you still retain some of its too ardent emotions. Delightful provision of nature in your regard. If we knew you wholly superhuman, how could we regard you as we now do, with sympathy and with——’

‘Bah!’ interrupted Mrs. Palegrave impatiently. ‘You know that I hate you, and that you deserve my hate.’

‘Nay,’ said the Count, gently raising his fat, white, ringed hand, in graceful depreciation, ‘even if I should admit the first declaration, I cannot acknowledge the second. Hated, perhaps. Deservedly hated—surely not.’

‘Yes, you deserve my hate! I once believed in you.

I told you every feeling of my heart, every purpose of my life. I thought you a man of boundless daring and energy, but I also thought you a man of lofty purpose and high ambition. I found you out to be a mere schemer and groveller, whose only ambition was to have a little money, to keep a fine house, and to rent an opera box. Then I despised you. Then you betrayed me. You have thwarted me in many places since, and I know well enough that you are only to be bought off from thwarting me again now. Well, what is your price ? Name it, and let us be free of each other even for a time.'

'Strange misconception ! ' he said, as if musing to himself. ' Marvellous misappreciation of the nature of Foscoli ! Am I to be bought off like a policeman ? I have come not to ask but to offer. I have come to tender my poor but zealous services. I admire still the fair and ever blooming Palegrave. I admire and envy not ! I ask not for the immortal youth. I have outlived the age of Roger Bacon. But I think I can help to forward your purposes, such as they are, while at the same time contributing to my own less ethereal and lofty, but possibly more practicable aims. I revere your feminine audacity of object and brilliancy of perception. But I think, perhaps, superior as you are to all your sex, you lack a little of that plodding patience, and of that calmer, perhaps more ignoble power of observation, which distinguish us practical men of the world. When I heard of that little affair of Philip Marley, be sure that I trembled for my gifted but rash friend. I knew your hand, and I feared lest some others might recognise it too.'

'Others ? ' she muttered in a scornful tone. ' As if there were other spies than—'

'Than me you would say ? My earnest anxiety for your interest does indeed render me keenly watchful. The mother is a spy upon her consumptive child ; the ardent lover upon the glances of his mistress.'

‘The patriot,’ pursued Mrs. Palegrave, imitating his tone, ‘upon the rash acts of his misguided countrymen. Is it not so?’

‘Not even ungenerous insinuations can make me forget my devotion.’

‘Call it what you will,’ she said. ‘You have talked of others watching me. Who can watch me but you?’

‘You English people,’ said the Count, ‘are always suspicious in the wrong place. We Italians, when we suspect at all, suspect rightly. You are a wise woman, a sibyl, a magician. I, a poor man of the world. Yet I know that at least three persons besides myself are aware of your being now in London—three persons, wholly strangers to each other, but deeply interested in you.’

‘It is false,’ she replied vehemently. ‘It is extravagant—it is impossible.’

‘Does the all-conquering Palegrave speak of impossibilities? What did Richelieu say? What fine phrases does your English dramatist put into his mouth? How finely Macready used to deliver that passage. Have you a copy of the play in your well-furnished library? No—you don’t read plays? Believe me you err. The drama is the—’

‘Is all this meant to make me forget your hint of a moment since?’ she asked, ‘or is it an affectation of evasion to excite my curiosity? You talk of three persons aware of my presence in London. Is this a deliberate falsehood, or an idle conjecture? Give me a direct answer if old habits have left you the power of answering anything truly and directly.’

‘Very well,’ he replied, ‘let us see. Last night your carriage crossed Southwark Bridge at twelve precisely. I was there and saw it.’

She started perceptibly.

‘Ah,’ he proceeded, ‘the exquisite simplicity of womanhood never fails to betray itself. How delightful, after all, are the little cords of peculiarity which bind even you to

the most infantile of your sex ! How thoroughly feminine to think of securing secrecy by entering London over a lonely bridge at midnight ! An escaped convict of our rougher sex would have chosen the most crowded thoroughfare of the city and would thus have avoided notice. I stood upon Southwark Bridge and saw your carriage cross it. So, too, did three other gentlemen with whom I have no personal acquaintance, but whose names I think I could mention. They had come, evidently like myself, to watch and wait. Eager friends, no doubt, whose instinctive sympathies led them, as mine did me, to the very spot at the very hour. Strange and deeply interesting coincidence ! Unfathomable mysteries of our nature ! Not, indeed, unfathomable to you who read all of nature's abstrusest secrets. And yet, if I interpret aright the expression which you cannot quite control, you are a little surprised to hear of this.'

She now buried her face in her hands for a few moments, then looked up with a terrible light in her eyes.

'Is this true ?' she asked fiercely, 'or are you juggling with me ?'

'With his hand upon his heart, Foscoli pledges his solemn honour,' said the visitor, gracefully placing his plump hand upon the region where in some persons a heart exists. 'Shall I name their names ? There was a French gentleman, an interesting exile, compelled like others for peculiar reasons to absent himself awhile from his native land. His remarkable name is, I think, Valpierre, but he has been known to call himself Maladine. There was in the second place an agreeable young English gentleman, a future ornament of two of the noblest professions—law and letters. His name, I think, is Latimer. And there was a very eminent professor of the lofty and sacred faculty of medicine, a certain Dr. Farbrick, not, I think, unknown to Mrs. Palegrave.'

'No !' she exclaimed passionately, and starting from

her seat. ‘Not he! He was not there. He could not have been there. I know he was not. And now I know that all the rest of your story is false. The man of whom you speak is far away.’

‘I am aware,’ said Foscoli, ‘that he was in Berlin only the other day—indeed, at the very same time that Madame Palegrave was in Rome. But Berlin is not far off in these railroad days. The same message which summoned me summoned him. I came from St. John’s Wood merely—he all the way from the capital of Prussia. And he was on Southwark Bridge last night at twelve o’clock. Send and ask him, if you will. Behold his address.’

Taking from his pocket a superbly embossed card-case, the Count drew forth a card which he presented, with an air of the extremest deference, to his companion. She almost shuddered on looking at it.

‘It is too true,’ she said. ‘Foscoli, you are a fiend incarnate.’

‘*Are* there fiends?’ he asked. ‘I have always doubted it. Except in Milton and Goethe, and my own still greater countryman (do you read Dante?) I do not see the use of beings of that class. But you understand all these subjects far better than I pretend to. I am not, however, conscious of any communion with the society of fiends. In this case I merely narrate to you what I saw. Summoned myself I went to Southwark Bridge. Summoned no doubt by the same power they whom I saw were there as well.’

‘You have several times repeated that you were summoned there. Summoned by whom and for what purpose?’

‘Summoned to meet or to see you. Surely nothing less interesting would have induced an elderly Italian like Foscoli to leave his shelter in St. John’s Wood and face the terrors of a spring midnight in London?’

‘And summoned by whom?’ she asked in a voice of almost thrilling anxiety.

Foscoli retained still the same bland and smiling expression on his fat round face.

‘Need you ask?’ he replied in the most winning tone. ‘Who but one has the power or the right to command the movements of the faithful and devoted Foscoli? Summoned surely by yourself, and yourself alone.’

The effect of these words upon her to whom he whispered them was something electrical. She sprang from her seat and uttered an exclamation which was almost a shriek.

Foscoli arose, and cautiously gliding across the floor with noiseless tread, made certain that the door was firmly closed.

‘Double doors,’ he observed. ‘A sensible arrangement which ought to be introduced into every house.’

Meanwhile the lady walked rapidly up and down the room, her hand to her eyes, and her shoulders evidently throbbing. At length she flung herself upon a sofa, and burst into a passion of tears.

‘Accursed weakness!’ she exclaimed at last, looking upward. ‘I am a very slave. I betray myself. I destroy myself. I have no control over the very power which all my life and toil and risk have gone to create. What avail to me is *all* when accompanied by this terrible and fatal weakness—this curse? This has been my terror—it will be my destruction. It has made me the subject of those I despise, and the hatred and horror of the few whom I would fain love.’

‘May the devoted Foscoli,’ whispered that unmoved individual, ‘rank himself in the latter category?’

His voice recalled her to the necessity of at least some seeming self-control. She assumed an appearance of calmness, and approached him.

‘Foscoli,’ she said, ‘we are not friends, and cannot be. But I do not deny that you may have the power to serve me, that you have qualities which, unfortunately for myself

I want. A crisis in my life is again approaching' (Foscoli smiled), 'and I need some help. You can give it to me. I had hoped never to see you again in life, but you have found me out and I accept your help. One of your idle sentences has suggested to me a plan and given me a hope. I embrace it.'

'*Et moi?*' said the gallant exile, approaching and extending both his hands.

The lady drew back very coldly, and said :

'For the present you can no doubt afford to make this house your principal residence.'

'In your service,' he replied in the most dulcet tone, 'I will sacrifice all, even my quiet roadside cottage and its roses. But one petition I must put forth. May I send for my guitar and have the society of my *Fidelio* ?'

She replied with a smile of disdainful assent, and left the room. There was a terrible glare in her livid eyes, and the compressed working of her lip as well as the manner in which she clenched her white slender hands exhibited a depth of dangerous emotion which even a brave spectator might have feared. Passing out she threw one glance of the most intense hatred and resentment back upon the placid Foscoli, who, happening to look up at the glass just that moment, caught the eyes which glared with such a concentrated hate upon him, and smiled in return a bland farewell as though the face which he saw reflected beamed only kindness and love on his.

'A remarkable woman,' soliloquised the exile when she had gone. 'Extraordinary blending of power and weakness, of the masculine and the feminine. I can understand her perfectly this time. She means to use me for some purpose, and then dispose of me for ever. I shall need to take care of myself—but I think I can do so. I admire her very much indeed. She does not believe it, perhaps, but it is not the less sincere. It has been my fate to be often misconstrued. Natures of a peculiarly

sensitive and lofty kind commonly are. At my mature age I am still not insensible to the emotions of early manhood. A remarkable woman. I should like to know by what peculiar process of extinction she means to get rid of me. I am not afraid of ghosts and apparitions, therefore I presume she will try some other mechanism. Chemistry, I understand, more especially that important branch of the science which refers to the various uses and combinations of poison. Well, we shall see. For the present I am safe, because I can be useful. Let the day care for itself. Foscoli lives in activity, in light, and in music.'

He sat to the piano which stood in the room, and sang in his magnificent bass to his own accompaniment a solo from one of Handel's masterpieces. His fingers rippled and sported over the keys as if he were another Thalberg, and his countenance expressed the very serenity and rapture of happiness.

## CHAPTER VII.

### L'AMOUR MÉDECIN.

LOUIS FARBRICK sat alone in his chamber, a room overlooking one of the London parks, two evenings after the singular meeting which we have described in the last chapter. He had been reading, but had laid the book aside. His window was open, and he gazed upon the twinkling stars, or paced in melancholy reverie up and down the chamber. Farbrick was a young man, but his fine face was assuming prematurely some of the lines of age.

'Am I then mad?' he asked himself in muttered tones. 'Is the struggle after science ending in insanity? Did love but warm my heart to scorch my brain? Am I like the moth and the candle of which writers have not

unfrequently spoken? Men begin to look strange upon me. I read suspicion in their side glances. Patients fall away from me. That I heed not. Better that I were indeed alone. I am unfitted to be useful now to aught on earth. I cannot ever serve her, the one I love! And she—where, *who* is she? I see her in my dreams, in my waking thoughts. Two nights since I saw her in very reality. Yes! I did see her, and it was no madness. But that I felt ashamed of doubting for a moment the evidence of my own clear senses, I would have asked one of those passing strangers on the bridge what *he* saw. But it needed not. I saw her, and I am not mad.'

What sound was that which echoed like a hollow laugh? What air was that which rushed cold and piercing through the room? That breath came not from across the park, or from the sweltering town. It chilled the room and raised the hair of the lonely occupant.

'It comes again,' he said. 'It still tortures, and haunts me, but I defy it.'

Faintly on the wall, in the darkness just beneath the window, were seen the luminary pale outlines of a female form.

'Fiend!' said the physician, 'do you come once more to haunt me? I fear you not. Where is she whom I love, and whom you are destroying or have destroyed by your hellish arts?'

A laugh was heard, and a voice replied:

'If you would save her whom you love, be guided by me. If you would wed her whom you love, obey me. The task is easy. Forget the past—swear solemnly never to reveal, never to allude to, all that has occurred. Swear that you will never, were you clasping your very bride, breathe one word of the strange sights you have seen, of the midnight voice you have heard—and you shall see *her* again and love her if you will. Refuse this oath, and I leave you, never to see her more—leave you to loneliness,

to misery, to be pointed at as insane and shunned of men. Forget what you have seen and heard and swear !'

'I swear !' exclaimed the physician. 'Were the compact made with hell itself, it can harm no one to accept it in such terms. To what avail my remembering or alluding to the past ? Men but smile at me and shun me. I accept the terms and swear !'

Was that a faint sigh which softly, gently, breathed through the room ? It came not from where the Luminary Form shone pale and ghastly.

Now all was silence and darkness. The Luminary Form was gone, and the physician exhausted fell upon the couch and slept.

Morning had far advanced when he awoke ; and he awoke refreshed and brightened. A new kind of day seemed to dawn upon him. He was like one who was just beginning to feel the fulness of returning health and strength after a long fit of exhausting illness.

He walked in the park and returned bright and almost happy. He felt certain he was about to see her whom he loved soon again.

As he entered he found a card upon his hall table. An early visitor. He took it carelessly up. It was inscribed in small and delicate copperplate, 'The Count Foscoli.' He had never seen the name before.

His servant informed him that the visitor promised to call again. In fact he had not long to wait. A handsome brougham soon drove up to the door, and the portly figure of the Italian exile was seen stepping out.

He entered Farbrick's study with gentlemanly ease, and without waiting interrogatory entered at once into explanation.

'Allow me,' he said, 'to claim at once the privilege of acquaintanceship with Dr. Farbrick, although I have never had the honour of seeing him before. But I am the nearest living relative of one who feels a deep interest in

Dr. Farbrick's happiness. In a word, I am the stepfather —may I not say the father—of Mrs. Palegrave, whose name can hardly have been forgotten by Dr. Farbrick. And I have come from Mrs. Palegrave to express the happiness with which upon her return to England, after a lengthened absence, she hears of Dr. Farbrick's restoration to health (he laid the slightest possible emphasis upon the word) and her hope to have soon the pleasure of meeting him.'

Is it wonderful that the physician started? He took the hand outstretched to him, and which clasped his with fervour. But there was something beyond description in the bland and polished manner of his new acquaintance which sent a thrill of distrust through him.

'Mrs. Palegrave,' he stammered, 'never mentioned to me that her stepfather was living.'

'She never did, my dear doctor,' replied his polite visitor. 'I anticipated your surprise, and it fills me with something of a penitent sensation. There are no secrets from one who is alike a physician and a friend. Why should I hesitate to mention that my daughter and I were for some years estranged by one of those trifling, but often protracted quarrels, which so commonly jar with family happiness? The fault, no doubt, was mine. I am an Italian, my dear doctor, and our Southern blood is warm. My daughter and I differed on some trivial point, and I was too warm—too warm, although moved only by ardent and disinterested affection. We parted for some years. What's that beautiful passage in your eminent poet about rocks that have been rent asunder? Ah, you don't remember it! We Italians study perhaps your best poetry more closely than you do yourselves! or your science absorbs you, and banishes poetry. I, too, am a little, a very little, versed or imbued in some of your sciences. Chemistry I have a little studied. Your profound and practical knowledge would, of course, think lightly of my poor and inexpert trifling.'

Farbrick thought he discerned a motive, and a kindly one, in the unintermitting stream of words. He believed it poured purposely forth in order to allow him to recover that composure and self-control which a message from the mother of one so dear, and so suddenly torn from him, could not but disturb. He spontaneously took the Count's fat, white hand, pressed it warmly, and motioned to a chair.

‘And Miss Palegrave?’ he asked with assumed steadiness and calmness.

‘Miss Palegrave,’ said the Count, ‘is perfectly restored to health at least. The long and frequent mental attacks culminated at last in delirium—a result unhappily too common in patients of a certain nervous and sensitive character. But why tell you that, my dear doctor—you who have made the structure, the strength, and the weaknesses of the human mind your especial subject of observation and study? Miss Palegrave recovered, with care and anxious watching, and is at this moment, although somewhat worn and wasted-looking, in the enjoyment of good health and in the possession of her perfect and naturally brilliant faculties. But I must warn you, my dear doctor’ (and here he laid his hand almost tenderly upon that of Farbrick), ‘that she has forgotten much of the events which preceded the delirium, and may perhaps greet you in a manner which a stranger would consider friendly, but which possibly might seem for reasons, on which I shall not be so indelicate as to dwell, painfully cold to *you*. But you are a physician, a man of science and intellect; you know what time and care can do, and you will trust to them, and to your own exquisite skill and noble heart, to effect a perfect restoration.’

He spoke these words in a tone of the most sympathetic and even affectionate modulation, laying a delicate emphasis upon the closing words, as if to convey to Farbrick the assurance of a hope which he was too delicate to express.

‘But, doctor,’ proceeded the Count, after a moment’s

expressive and measured pause, ‘ I came here rather to speak of others than of Miss Palegrave, and you, and me, dear as the interests of the former must ever be to me. My daughter entrusted me with her message to you partly because, I grieve to say, she is unable to appear in this quarter herself. My daughter, Dr. Farbrick, has been only too anxious as a mother and as a friend. Her health and her spirits have suddenly given way. Nothing serious in the least, I hope and firmly believe. But she desires the advice of a valued and a trusted friend—need I say that she wishes to see Dr. Farbrick ? ’

Farbrick was as one in a dream. He heard the voice and apprehended the meaning of the words it uttered. But a few hours before he had been in the regions of the magical and the supernatural. He could not all at once descend to everyday life, to old ways, to mortal companionships, to mortal weaknesses and ills.

But he took his hat, entered Count Foscoli’s brougham, and was driven rapidly to Park Lane. The Count talked all the way of books, of music, of flowers, and of birds. Farbrick was a profound naturalist. But when he conversed with Foscoli he seemed to have known nothing, so quickly was all his acquirement anticipated, criticised, surpassed, enlarged by a few careless sentences from his singular companion. Thrilled although Farbrick was with anxiety to see again her whom he loved, with wonder at the extraordinary succession of adventures into which he found himself plunged, he nevertheless had to acknowledge in his own mind that the conversation of Foscoli interested, fascinated, all but engrossed him.

They entered the library where you, reader, have already been with us. Foscoli left Farbrick alone; only for a few minutes. He entered the library again and a lady leaned on his arm.

‘ I need scarcely,’ he said, ‘ present to Dr. Farbrick my granddaughter, Lucilia Palegrave.’

Farbrick was a man accustomed to restrain his emotions, but the blood rushed to his face and he felt almost unable to speak. Lucilia advanced towards him in the friendliest and frankest fashion, pressed his hand, congratulated him upon his restored health, and in a few words expressive of deep emotion, spake of the sudden and singular change which had taken place in her mother's condition. She made, of course, no reference to the past. That was no time for such allusion. Farbrick appreciated her delicacy, and at once proceeded to inquire regarding the manner and symptoms of Mrs. Palegrave's illness.

But his thoughts were with her who stood before him. Yes, conceal it though she would, she must have suffered long and deeply. What history of silent agony was written in those lines about the mouth and eyes, slight, indeed, but full of painful meaning to the eye of the physician, of the lover. It almost seemed to him as if the crisis through which she had passed, brief comparatively, although it had been, had ebbed away, carrying youth upon its receding tide. Youth, but surely not loveliness; for that was a beautiful, sad, spiritual, almost awful countenance, on which he gazed; yes, terrible in its severe, and mournful, and wasted lines, was that the face over whose soft girlish outlines he used to hang so rapturously scarce a year back? Was that clear, chilling, thrilling voice the sweet utterance which used to tell him of love? Sometimes he gazed with almost a doubt, almost a terror upon her. Ah, but sickness, delirium are quick transformers. Who should better know that than he, the physician? If he might but say one word of the past; but hear her breathe one accent; see her give one tender glance of love! Selfish thought which he strove to banish. Enough that she whom he loved still lived, and that he gazed upon her face.

He constrained himself at last, and remembered only that he was a healer come to visit the sick.

After a while he was shown into the darkened room

where lay the patient. He had been forewarned that she was subject to unconscious and even delirious fits ; that she could not at those times endure light or much of sound. Lucilia, Count Foscoli, and a foreign-looking woman who acted as nurse, were present. In the darkness Farbrick could see only the bare outlines of Mrs. Palegrave's face still further shadowed by her long dark hair. She lay gazing around her quietly, and rarely spoke. Only when he entered she looked at him fixedly for a moment, and in a tone of momentary thrillingness pronounced his name, Why did the sound penetrate his every fibre ? Why, when he took her hand to feel her pulse, did his heart beat with so wild and passionate a throb ? Was it because of the strange and supernatural terrors which so long had haunted him in connection with her who lay unconscious before him ? Or was it because the scene and the purpose of his visit reminded him of that past time when he thus stood beside the couch of another beautiful and unconscious patient whom he loved with all his heart's passion ? How strange it seemed somehow to know that she, the loved one, stood now in health and reason by his very side, and yet his heart scarcely seemed to pour its emotions towards her ! Poor physician ! Helpless healer ! Cheated and mocked by his emotions ! There were moments when in the form stretched upon that couch he almost believed he saw the living figure of his loved Lucilia, and could have flung himself upon her bosom and conjured her to recognise him, to name his name, to tell him that she knew and loved him still.

The voice of Foscoli recalled him to himself.

' Until consciousness returns,' he said, ' you can of course do but little for my dearest daughter. This fit will soon leave her, and then we will have the windows opened and the light and air admitted. Then I trust you will be able to give us some guidance and some hope.'

Farbrick gave some ordinary prescription for cooling

draughts, sedatives, &c., and left the house with a throbbing heart and giddy brain.

The following day he returned and saw Mrs. Palegrave again. She was then perfectly conscious, but described herself as very weak, and calmly declared that she felt herself dying. She begged that Lucilia might be kept ignorant of her fears, and said that she had herself insisted upon her daughter's driving out that day, that she might not be present at the medical interview. Lucilia, therefore, Farbrick did not see. He felt none of his emotions of the previous day, except that it struck him painfully how like to each other mother and daughter had grown in illness. Did the same doom, then, threaten both? He trembled for Lucilia.

He recommended that other physicians should be called in. Foscoli, while professing the fullest confidence in Farbrick's medical skill, earnestly and warmly supported the recommendation. The patient peremptorily, and, indeed, almost peevishly, declined. Farbrick consented to humour her, not believing that any catastrophe was really at hand.

Next day he was summoned rather suddenly, and was told that Mrs. Palegrave had prepared her will, and was determined upon having it signed and completed. A notary, of whose character and respectability Farbrick was aware, was in attendance.

‘Dr. Farbrick will see,’ said the patient in a faint voice, ‘that I have not forgotten him, and that I have made provision for an event which I earnestly hope may one day come to pass. I wish him to sign the will as a witness. I have read it, and do not need it to be read again. I deliver it as my hand and deed—is not that your legal phrase, Mr. Lincoln?’ she said, faintly smiling, to the notary.

‘It is usual,’ whispered the man of law, ‘to read out the contents of the will in the presence of the witnesses.’

‘If it be five minutes under perusal it will be read in the presence of a delirious woman,’ said the patient. ‘I feel myself already growing confused. Let me sign my name.’

And, supported by the nurse and Count Foscoli, she signed with a firm hand the name ‘Lucilia Palegrave.’

Farbrick and Foscoli signed as witnesses.

She lay back on the pillow and thanked them with a smile. ‘Surely,’ thought Farbrick, ‘on that face there is no shadow of death.’

He descended the stairs with Mr. Lincoln. ‘I do not think, doctor, that your patient is really in any immediate danger,’ said the notary.

‘I certainly have no present fears,’ replied Farbrick. ‘But the case somewhat puzzles me.’

As they reached the hall both started and looked with blank faces upon each other. A shriek had rung through the house. Not like the shriek of the dying, but like that of delirium—wild, piercing, terrifying.

‘It is Lucilia’s voice,’ said Farbrick. ‘I must—I will see her !’

She had not appeared during this last interview. It seemed but natural that she should be spared the pain.

Farbrick turned and began to re-ascend the stairs. The foreign-looking nurse met him.

‘Mrs. Palegrave is again a little delirious,’ she said. ‘But it is nothing. She will be better presently. Count Foscoli thinks it needless to detain you, but sends his compliments, and hopes you will return during the evening.’

Farbrick mechanically quitted the house. But the shriek haunted him all the way, and followed him into his lonely study. He longed to return to the house.

But he was destined not soon to return there. Leaving his own home that night, he had not gone two streets away when he perceived that he was being dodged and followed by two men who skulked in the darkness. It was about

ten o'clock, and he was not to have returned to Mrs. Palegrave's until near midnight. Those were the days when garrotte was the terror of the capital. He looked round for a policeman—there was none. Need it be said that there was none to be seen? He was a strong man; but his only weapon was a slight cane. Determined to show no fear, he turned directly round and prepared to pass the men. As he did so one came in front to bar his passage. Farbrick endeavoured to shoulder him away, when he felt the gripe of the other around his throat from behind. He struck wildly out, but a blow of a heavy bludgeon fell upon his head, and the strangling gripe of the ruffian behind tightened around him. His head reeled, lights danced before his eyes—another blow, and he staggered. He could, however, hear a loud shout from behind, and footsteps hurrying up, when the gripe was released, and he fell senseless and bleeding on the pavement.

It was the voice of Philip Latimer, Esq., of the Inner Temple, which scared away the ruffians who had attacked Dr. Farbrick, and the form of this learned young personage promptly showed itself by the fallen doctor's side.

‘Hullo!’ he exclaimed, flinging away his cigar, ‘here's a go! Stab men in the dark! Here, friend, lend a hand, and let us get this poor fellow out of this place.’

These words were addressed to a stranger who had just come up. The assailants had evidently escaped round the corner.

The stranger was a powerfully built man, beyond the middle age. Philip was struggling in vain to raise the robust and heavy frame of the fallen man. The stranger gently pushed him aside, and lifted Farbrick in his arms as if he had been raising an infant. ‘Whither shall he be borne?’ asked the stranger in a slightly foreign tone, but speaking perfect English.

‘How the devil should I know?’ responded our friend

Latimer. 'Seems a gentleman, and is a decidedly good-looking fellow. Hope he isn't dead. I say, what a strong fellow you are! How do you manage to carry him so easily?'

'Strength,' said the stranger, 'is given to Society to destroy—to the Individual to defend.'

'Yes, just so,' rejoined Philip; 'but I wish we saw a policeman somewhere. Suppose you hold this poor fellow up while I look down all the neighbouring areas for an officer of the law. But I say, though,' he added, looking up suddenly at his new companion, 'you must have met the ruffians who knocked him down. They must have run your way.'

'They did run my way,' was the calm response.

'Then why on earth did you not stop them?'

'I did stop them.'

'But you must have let them off again.'

'I did let them off.'

'Afraid of getting your own brains knocked out, I dare say. Wish I had been there—I shouldn't have been afraid, though I haven't half your strength. By Jove! a chap like you should have held a dozen such.'

Philip began to look with some distrust upon his new companion, and evidenced a manifest disinclination to leave the senseless man, who wore a splendid watch and chain, alone in such suspicious company.

Suddenly a rapid footfall was heard, and somebody came along whistling a difficult passage from Beethoven. The new-comer was a tall and portly man. He instantly approached our friends.

'I apprehend the situation,' he remarked, at once. 'An attempt at robbery, and a wounded man. Can I render any assistance? Let me be commanded. In the cause of humanity my time and trouble are as nothing. Your London streets are quite a disgrace to that which you call your civilization. As well to be killed by a *coup d'état*

as by a robber. An emperor's knock on the head is no more than a burglar's. But, good heavens! What do I see? My dear and valued friend, Dr. Farbrick! One of the lights of our science thus all but extinguished! His residence happily is quite close at hand. Let us bear him thither.'

This new-comer was Count Foscoli.

Even in London the policeman must appear at last. Two of the body came hurrying up. A small crowd had gathered.

'Allow me,' said Foscoli, 'to request that all will stand aside except those immediately interested. Air is generally considered of importance to persons in a swoon. My valued friend, Dr. Farbrick, is a man of powerful constitution. He will soon recover consciousness.'

Dr. Farbrick was borne to his own home. The functionary of the law opened a hasty investigation into the circumstances. Philip detailed all he saw and knew, which was not much. Count Foscoli had seen nothing of the affair. The stranger gave his name as Leblanc, a Frenchman, and stated that the assailants had passed him as he came up the street. It struck everyone as singular that he should have made no attempt to stay the miscreants. Count Foscoli in particular shrugged his shoulders and looked at the inspector with eyes full of meaning. The inspector, having considered the whole transaction, determined to arrest the stranger.

But the stranger was gone. Immediately after making his statement he had quitted the room unperceived. No one there knew anything of him.

But we know him. It was Pierre Valpierre. It was Maladine. It was the *forçat*, the outlaw, the public benefactor, the refugee. It was the scorn of Society. It was Society's reproach, warning, moral lesson.

It is certain that Valpierre had met the fugitive assassins. Could any eyes have gazed from adjacent windows

as these in their flight met Leblanc or Valpierre, they would have seen a strange sight.

For as the assassins fled, Valpierre calmly stood before them and said 'Stand!' They attempted to hurl him from their path. Absurd, futile. He laid one hand firm on the collar of each, and they stood as in irons.

'What have you done?' he calmly asked. 'Murdered?'

'What the devil's that to you?' was the rude response of one. 'Are you a bobby?'

The other attempted to trip him up, to seize him by the throat, to strike at him with a bludgeon. With one hand Valpierre held both their collars. With the other he disarmed them both; always perfectly serene, and as one who half unconscious and abstracted performs some slight and easy duty.

Then he held each out at full arm's length from him. And he said as if talking to himself :

'Murder attempted for the sake of robbery! Blood drunk in the thirst for gold. Do ye need gold? I have some and need it not. Here; take this money, and henceforth seek to serve and love your kind! Society must be redeemed through its victims. The lost must become the finders. The outcast is to become the protector. The robber shall be the regenerator. Away and quit the realms of night for the regions of the sun!'

He placed a heavy purse in the hand of either robber, then released his grip from each and went his way without looking back. The outcasts gazed upon each other bewildered, and fled.

It was then that Valpierre proceeded onward and came up with Philip Latimer.

The rest we know up to the time of Valpierre's disappearance.

Several days after Mr. Philip Latimer thus wrote to a confidential friend :

‘I have made a new acquaintance—a very worthy fellow, although a doctor. I found him, sir, as the Good Samaritan found the traveller, fallen among thieves, and rather cut up indeed by them. I attended to his wounds, and saw to the wine and the oil ; but, luckily perhaps for your correspondent, he was not called upon to stand the test of paying the twopence. Farbrick is his name—Louis Farbrick—and he is the best specimen of his brethren I have ever seen. I look in upon him every day now that he is convalescing, and we smoke the calumet of peace a good deal.

‘But there is a coincidence about this matter—at least, something which you, unbelieving sceptic, heretic, and Pharisee, would call a coincidence ; but which I, sir, prefer to call the guiding hand of an irresistible destiny. There’s a providence, sir, which shapes our ends, and all the rest\* of it. We are rowing in the same boat, he and I. We are slaves of the same fatal passion. He too has been to sea—aye, on the very same waves, and has been wrecked and cast ashore on the very same rough beach. He too loves Ophelia—forty thousand brothers could not with all their quantity of love make up his sum. He loves Lucilia. He knew her even before your humble servant’s foolish passion became a target for the scorn of certain unthinking comrades. But out and alas ! there the parallel ends. For I fear it cannot be doubted that the girl loves him, and by Jove, do you know, hated rival though he be, I don’t blame her, and I could almost find it in my heart to congratulate him. He is wealthy, sir, which other persons are not. Look upon this picture and on this. He has plenty of practice in his profession, and he does not want it, having fortune enough besides. I have no practice in mine, and I do want it, having not a penny in the world. I am going to visit her with him. Her mother, the siren, is dead and buried, poor woman. She died while Farbrick was still in danger from his wounds (did I say that he was garrotted and fearfully battered ?) ; and albeit I loved her

not, yet I was shocked to hear of her death. They are living in Park Lane—by “they” I mean Lucilia (*eheu!*) and her mother’s stepfather, a fat Italian count, a gentlemanlike, accomplished, and on the whole devilish queer sort of person.

‘Yes, I did hold a brief in *Potts* and *Potts*, and cross-examined two witnesses, &c. &c.’

On a subsequent day this same young man writes again a letter of which the following is an excerpt :

‘We were *there* last night. We saw *her*. She is very much altered, looks paler and older somehow, the very same, and yet not at all like herself. I asked Farbrick coming away if he did not think her greatly changed, and he became quite *distract* and fell into such a reverie that I had smoked out two whole cigars before he recovered. What extraordinary beings we are! Am I a selfish, mean, base, pitiful scoundrel? Is it that I think the girl less lovely because she evidently does not love me? I know that she is to be married to Farbrick. I think of her a year back, and I madden at the thought that she is not mine. I look upon her now, and I seem somehow to be resigned. I wonder whether there is any reality about that *Bride of Corinth* story? I took up my old volume of Goethe last night on getting home, and the book opened at that very place, “Es schlägt Kein Hertz in ihrer Brust.” I don’t know what to make of it, but when I look at her or think of her, I see before me the dead *Bride of Corinth*, a bloodless ghost in her lover’s arms. Of course you will laugh at all this, and you may.’

It seemed indeed to Philip’s friends that he was cured already of his passion. They had expected his convalescence for some time. I do not believe that story of the *Bride of Corinth*. At least, I think we have not heard all the truth of it. I dare say the young gentleman it was who had grown rather cool upon the business, and chose to invent that little tale about the girl’s having no heart at

all, and being all bone and ice and lifelessness. Whoever in ordinary life tells his mistress that he has changed his mind towards her, and that whereas the fire of her eyes once warmed his heart, now it only freezes it like snow and salt? Don't we always begin by accusing *her* of the *change* and finding in her the coldness? You do not suppose that Romeo was such a baby as to walk straight off to Rosalind and announce to her that he did not care twopence about her any longer, that he had been struck all of a heap by Juliet's beauty, which taught the torches to burn bright by her fine foot, straight leg, and other charms and graces? *Allons donc.* Be sure that Romeo went about the business in quite a different way. 'You are cold to me, you are changed to your Romeo, dearest Rosalind,' says the rogue. 'Nay, never seek to disguise it! I read it in your altered tones and averted eyes' (the poor girl all the while clinging around him and beseeching him with looks and words which might have softened a turbaned Turk). 'You love me no more, madame,' he says. 'I saw it this long time; you have given your heart to some one else. Hence, thou false one! go, ungrateful! I pardon, pity, and leave you!' And away he dashes from the swooning Rosalind, having by this time quite convinced himself that he really is a mirror of constancy, and a deceived and outraged man, and he knows no repose until five minutes after, when, resting on the bosom of Juliet, he pours out the assurances of his first, his last, his unalterable and never-dying passion.

Now this we thought at the time was the case with Mr. Philip. We supposed he had found a new Juliet, or at all events had grown tired of the old one. From our somewhat intimate knowledge of the young fellow's disposition, we were of opinion that nothing could be more likely to suggest to him deficiencies in Rosalind, than the possibility that Rosalind might after all prefer to marry somebody else. Therefore we were not in the least

alarmed about his personal health and comfort. We had opportunities too of perceiving that the bitter beer had not lost its taste nor the Havannah its flavour. I have no doubt that when Philip gets on at the bar, which of course, having talent and high principle, he is sure to do, these being the only essentials of success in that noble profession, provided indeed that the bloated aristocracy should not grow too jealous of him as they did of the eminent Queen's Counsel, now an exile in a foreign land, because of his too brilliant genius and his fatally elevated character—but I have no doubt, I say, that when Philip gets on at the bar, he will marry some blooming girl and be a very devoted husband to her. I do not say that he will tell her each and every incident of his early passion for Rosalind, and Juliet, and Lucilia, and how do I know how many besides, and I certainly do not mean to send to his *cara sposa* the little bundles of his letters I happen still to possess, in which he pours out all the ardour of his successive loves. I say I don't think he will tell his wife all these old stories. My dear sir, have you confided to your beloved consort the full particulars of all your little predilections and love pursuits before your marriage? Of course you know all her secrets, oh dear yes, every one; that is quite a different thing. Our women are all the properest, most passionless, and constant creatures in the world. They never know what it is to fall in love until the very moment when they are enabled with propriety to meet the advances of their future husbands. There is your wife, Jones, my friend, the most proper of beings. Since she was sent to her aunts to be out of the way of that dancing master, I don't believe she fell into any nonsensical love affair (for really I don't call that little flirtation with Captain Clinks any harm) until she was going to marry the curate whom you, Jones, so happily supplanted. There was a time indeed when your humble servant had some reason to think that his addresses were

not—but psha! what use is there in raking up such old stories. I give you my word, I have burned every one of her letters long ago (except just two or three), and nobody shall ever see them. So we are all confidence, candour, and constancy. And what matters it after all when in a very little while the Faithful Shepherd sometimes is treated no better than—nay not half so well as—the Lovelace or the inconstant; and to this day the scandalous world has not quite made up its mind as to whether Penelope in the absence of her spouse was the most faithful of wives, or Ulysses on his return the most believing and unsuspicious of husbands?

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE ENCOUNTER.

LOUIS FARBRICK was restored to health. He was restored to the society of her whom a year before he would have given health and even life only to call his own. Was he happy?

It was during his illness that the death and interment of Mrs. Palegrave took place. On his restoration to health it was determined that after a fitting time of mourning had elapsed he should become the husband of Lucilia. He had himself resolved immediately after that happy event to leave England for many years. In a bright southern climate he hoped to find health for his beloved and happiness for himself.

Yes, happiness; for he was not happy. He had sought felicity in science, and it eluded and mocked him. He sought it in love, and it vanished at his very approach.

Lucilia was not the same. Her illness and delirium had left a deep—he sometimes thought a fearful—change. She was abstracted, fitful, querulous; sometimes given to passionate bursts and gusts of affection, sometimes

suspicious, cold, watchful, anxious. In the presence of Count Foscoli she was especially uneasy and complaining. 'Come away,' she would frequently say in a thrilling whisper to Farbrick, 'come away.'

'Where, my dearest?' he would reply, tenderly humouring her.

'Anywhere, oh, anywhere out of this!'

This was always when Count Foscoli entered the room.

Meanwhile Count Foscoli was as bland and genial as ever. He played upon his guitar; he trolled out great bursts of song in his magnificent bass voice; he fondled his darling Fidelio.

One evening Farbrick had to leave the house of the Count and Lucilia somewhat early. He walked rather sadly homeward. Lucilia had been peculiarly *distracted*, fitful, and melancholy. Count Foscoli had remained in the room during the whole evening. Scarcely had Farbrick departed when Lucilia rose to her feet.

'Foscoli,' she said sternly, 'there must be an end of this. We must part.'

'When you will, dearest granddaughter,' said the exile mildly. 'You hurry abroad on the wings of love; the venerable parent remains behind in solitude. Poor consolation to him, a fine house and a large fortune. He is not mercenary; but such as the consolation is he accepts it and his destiny. We part, then. To you the love and the happiness; to me the fortune and the solitude.'

'You shall be paid,' said the lady, 'if that be your meaning. We will, of course, hold to our agreement. You shall have your terms on condition that you follow me no more.'

'Dearest Lucilia, how can you forget that if I be the mercenary creature you would paint me, I shall no longer have need to follow you? You fly to the arms of a devoted lover who scorns fortune. *Ce n'est pas ta dot!* He has wealth for both. This your tender mother foresaw, and,

pitying the loneliness of the deserted Foscoli, she provided for his sinking years by leaving him her fortune.'

'Foscoli,' said the other contemptuously, 'you dream or dote.'

'We are all dreamers,' he replied, 'in one sense. Life, indeed, itself—what is it but a dream? But if there be any prosaic reality it is surely in dull, legal parchment, such, for instance, as the will I hold in my possession made by my beloved step-daughter, the late Lucilia Palegrave, in the presence of Mr. Lincoln the notary, and witnessed by Dr. Louis Farbrick, in which she bequeathes the whole of her fortune, saving the usual trifling legacies, to her devoted stepfather Foscoli!'

'You have not dared to attempt such a trick?' She turned upon him with livid cheeks and eyes of flame.

'Why "trick?"—a coarse expression. The late Lucilia Palegrave signed the will with her own hand. She was in full possession of her senses. She did not permit it to be read aloud to her, but that, as you may possibly know, was because there were certain bequests and considerations in it which it was feared might awaken certain suspicions on the part of one of the witnesses, my valued friend and revered physician, Dr. Farbrick. Why unjustly infer that Lucilia Palegrave did not know that the will bequeathed all her property to me? What avails any such inference now? The will is signed, sealed, and proved. Lucilia Palegrave—the late Lucilia—is dead. She surely cannot come to life again; besides being impossible, that, you know, would be inconvenient. It would give rise to the strangest inquiries; it might necessitate the evolving of a whole biography. No, no, Lucilia Palegrave the elder is dead. It is not for us poor mortals to struggle against the decrees of fate.'

'You shall repent this,' she said. 'This I will not endure. I will expose you to the world for the cheat, liar, and forger that you are. You shall die the death of a felon!'

Away with everything rather than endure this ! I will proclaim to Farbrick what you are, and how you have deceived both him and me.'

Foscoli smiled.

' And proclaim to Farbrick, too, what *you* are,' he said in tones of gentle remonstrance. ' What, then, becomes of the late dream of love and the hope of everlasting youth ? Is he not the sole being in this generation who can aid you to work out your mystery and give you life ? So, at least, you confided to me in a moment of generous trustfulness. He alone possesses the nerves, the brains, the vital force, the spirit, which could divine the whereabouts and work the combination of the magic elixir ! Foscoli is too sensuous, too vulgar, too much of the earth, earthy, and the subtle spirits will not deal with him ! Why, then, refuse to the poor Foscoli, who knows no magic art and cannot prolong his existence by one day, the power of making his few remaining years happy in his vulgar, enjoying, human kind of way ? He is, unhappily for himself—fortunately, perhaps, for his friends—only mortal. He soon is gathered to his illustrious fathers. The wealth, of which he has had but a brief use, returns scarcely impaired to his longer-lived friend. Think, oh, my fair daughter—granddaughter—what is it ?—think, and be prudent ! Remember you have denied to the admiring Foscoli your hand and heart ! Take not from him the poor consolation of enjoying for a while less noble treasures. Remember that if he loses these you lose all. Be calm ; let me play you this delicious *cantata* ! A soul so spiritual as yours cannot be soothed and lulled by any influence so well as by divinest harmony.'

She had quitted the room. The Count remained alone in the gathering twilight. He sang and played to himself, a sweet smile mantling his face, and his eyes upturned with the enthusiastic and enraptured expression of one whose very soul is wrapped up in his own strains.

The window was an open one with a balcony. It

looked upon a delicious garden at the back of the house. The front windows, it need not be said, looked upon the park.

Foscoli sat and played, his face turned from the window. He was rapt in his own sounds, and did not hear a rustling and rattling of the balcony. He was rapt in the music, and did not notice a sudden darkening of the window. A man had climbed into the balcony and entered the room before he was aware of any presence but his own.

The sound attracted him at last. He turned round and saw a man, strongly built, roughly clad, covered with dust and soil.

Foscoli was both brave and calm.

‘A robber,’ he quietly said, and looked with a hasty, comprehensive glance around the chamber in quest of a weapon.

‘No robber,’ said the intruder. ‘A victim—a fugitive from society ! A stranger, I claim, I beseech your shelter. The spies of French injustice and despotism have hunted me from place to place. Chance or heaven sent me to take sudden refuge in this house. I am at your mercy. I claim your English protection.’

‘A fine speech !’ said the Count. ‘But if you are no criminal you need no protection ; and British law cannot shield you from French police, supposing, which I am much inclined to believe, that the French police have good reason to hunt you down. Besides, friend, it just occurs to me that I have seen your face before. You are the man who disappeared so suddenly on the night when my friend, Dr. Farbrick, was so nearly murdered. The British police will be glad to see you too. You have run your head into the lion’s mouth, my friend, and the lion, not being an ass, will close his jaws. It is particularly convenient and indeed essential for me that somebody should be convicted of that attack. You are the man I have long sought. How delightful that you should have come uninvited !’

Interposing between the stranger and the window, the Count was about to ring the bell violently.

Need we say that the stranger was Pierre Valpierre ?

The expression upon Valpierre's face was merely calm and sad.

'Stay !' he said in a firm but melancholy tone. 'A word before you summon the myrmidons of your police. You have refused me the shelter which the desert Arab, nay, the civilized outcast, denies not. I know *you*. I knew you at the first glance, but I scorned to betray you. Have you forgotten *me* ? Have you forgotten Pierre, surnamed the Steam Hammer, at the *bagnes* of Toulon ? For years you and I were chained by the same ball. You are the Corsican forger and felon who escaped from prison with me. You have sold yourself to the Austrian, and you are now a spy. A word to the police of France, and you are dragged back to the hulks for life. A word to any Italian Carbonaro, and there is a dagger in your heart ! I betray not your secret. Amend your life and live ! But dare not to detain me !'

With a firm step Valpierre turned to quit the room by means of the window and the balcony which he had scaled.

'You shall never leave this room alive,' said the Count. 'You have my secret, but you shall not betray it. You have broken into this house, I presume, to rob and murder ; it is my right to defend myself.'

With a gleaming knife in his hand he sprang upon Valpierre.

Then arose a short but terrible struggle.

Valpierre was unarmed. Foscoli was strong and active. But Valpierre's strength was as that of a giant. He wrested the weapon from his enemy, flung him on the floor, and bent over him !

Noiselessly the door opened, and a female form, unseen in the semi-darkness, gazed with gleaming eyes upon the struggle.

Foscoli strove to rise. Valpierre did not prevent him, only holding both his struggling arms in a Titanic gripe. No word was spoken for a moment. At length Valpierre said—

‘Man of snares and crime, I seek not your life. Repent and live. I betray not your secret if you molest not me. Turn from your evil ways—and farewell.’

He was opening his grasp to permit his antagonist to rise. Foscoli’s face was towards the door. His eyes met those of the silent gazer, and his countenance underwent such an expression of surprise that Valpierre involuntarily turned to look in the same direction.

At that instant there was a flash of fire, a sharp explosion, a wreath of smoke, and Foscoli fell back on the floor.

He was dead. A pistol bullet had pierced his heart!

Valpierre stood appalled. She who had seen the struggle rushed forward and clasped his hand.

‘Not a word!’ she said. ‘I saved your life once, and can save it again. That you are not a galley-slave now you owe to me. Speak not a word of what you have seen. Your enemy and mine—the enemy of society and of me—is dead. I, not you, have slain him. But you must escape from here for ever, and your escape shall save us both.’

She drew him away in haste. Valpierre followed as one who walks in a dream.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE PARK LANE TRAGEDY.

NEXT day every newsboy in town shouted the ‘Park Lane Tragedy!’ The press broke out into second, third, fourth editions with ‘latest intelligence’ and ‘still later particulars.’ It was read by the passengers on the omnibuses.

It was discussed by the passengers in the penny steamers. Men rushed frantically into public-houses and had two-pennyworths hot with sugar to allay their excitement. Park Lane was besieged, and the aristocratic denizens of that locality were favoured with the presence of visitors, the like of whom they had never seen before. Only the most energetic and determined conduct on the part of Inspector Grumps, 'the indefatigable Inspector Grumps' as he was described in the reports of the evening papers, could effect a clearance for the carriages of the distinguished residents. The 'Park Lane Tragedy' was wafted up to Hammersmith upon the smoke of the Kew steamers. The 'Park Lane Tragedy' was borne to Greenwich by the ebb tide, and actually banished for that whole day the narratives of the five-and-forty peripatetic pensioners who had all been present at the death of Nelson. Placards about it were posted at Hampstead and Highbury. It was the theme of moral exposition at the pious tea-parties of Clapham. The drivers of the omnibuses knew all about it. The toll-men on the bridges carried on unbroken conversation about it, taking up with the new-comer exactly where the last comer had left off. Little Simon Smiffles talked about it all day like the rest, and rubbed his nose and looked up at the Clock Tower incessantly. The chimes from the Clock Tower itself seemed to hammer out 'Park Lane Tragedy' all through the day. The air was redolent of 'Park Lane Tragedy.' The water rushing round the buttresses of the bridges flashed merrily to the sound of 'Park Lane Tragedy.'

Anyone who had been to Park Lane that day and gazed from the outside upon the scene of the tragedy was a man of importance in the City and the borough. People came around him and caught his every word, to bear it away into new spheres, and become persons of importance themselves. Individuals who had never spoken to him before solicited the favour of his company at the bar of the

adjacent public-house and stood anything he liked. The landlord paused in the act of drawing the half-and-half to catch every word of the conversation, the barmaid opened her eyes and gazed at the stranger, and the small potboy in the distance peeped at him. Everybody had his own version of the event ; but this man's story bore down all the rest, for he had been to Park Lane and looked at the scene of the tragedy.

All day long the bell of the area in the Park Lane house was being pulled by the envoys of the evening papers eager for fresh news. The penny-a-liners had been hovering round the spot from early dawn, and were at intervals seen diving into the 'Great Duke' public-house round the corner, where the servants of the aristocracy bestowed their patronage. There the penny-a-liners prepared fresh heaps of 'flimsy' and despatched them to the City, and then, with reddening faces and thickening utterance, sought the area bell once more and inquired furtively after later intelligence. The coroner had been communicated with, and the 'active and intelligent beadle, Mr. Bones,' had already been making prompt arrangements to accommodate the twelve good men and true who were to form the inquest. He had taken for this important purpose the large room of the 'Great Duke,' and had had a long table placed down the centre, with seats for the twelve British householders, a few dusty old benches for the British public, an armchair at the top for the British coroner, and a little table at the side of that functionary, with chairs around it, and pens, ink, and paper on it, for the British press. These arrangements completed, he surveyed the room with a justifiable complacency, and proceeded to notify to the coroner and the jury.

Presently the jury began to assemble. They had been already sworn, and they had proceeded to view the body. This they had done timidly and respectfully, with all the deference due to a body viewed in a house in Park Lane.

Led by the coroner, and escorted by a file of liveried servants, they had entered the room with their hats off and on tip-toe, treading as noiselessly as possible over the rich carpets, leaving as little as possible of the dust off their boots upon the costly hearthrug, speaking in low whispers, and generally demeaning themselves with that regard for propriety and the feelings of the inmates which became the British juror when called upon to view a dead body in a house in Park Lane. Then, having viewed it enough, they were led by the coroner, followed by the servants, and thus, silently but ostentatiously, conducted into the street. Then the blinds of the room were drawn down, and the body was left alone.

Alone, save for the buzzing flies which made their way through every chink and cranny, and hovered and circled round the ghastly face of the dead man, alighting now upon his eyebrows, and now upon his chin, and now upon his hand, and then flying off and then returning, as if they, too, had been commissioned to hold a sort of coroner's inquest and to view the body. Alone, save for the bright streak of summer sun which found its way in through the drawn venetian blinds and closed shutters, and played now upon the carpet and now upon the ceiling, and now, broken and shadowed, formed a sort of mocking halo round the dead man's head, and now fell slanting across his lips, and lighted them as with the old, familiar, half-mocking smile. Alone, save for the little bird, forgotten in his cage at the window, which had ceased to sing when the room was first darkened, believing that night had come, but had grown suddenly brisk and musical as the sunlight penetrated, and now hopped up and down its cage from floor to perch and chirped merrily, or thrust its little beak between the bars of the cage, and, with head turned inquisitively on one side, seemed to ask why its master slept so long and did not awaken to greet it with a friendly whistle. Alone, save for the one other friend, the little spaniel Fidelio, who, pushing

the room door a little open with his nose, crept softly in, and, vaguely appreciating something strange in the situation, stole with noiseless paws across the carpet, leaped upon the bed, licked the white hand of the dead man, and, coiling itself silently upon his feet, fell asleep there.

All through the day the rattle of the carriages in the street and the hum in the park, mingled with many pleasant voices of children, made their way into the grim, silent, lonely chamber of death. Loud successions of knocks at adjacent mansions, driving up of carriages, clattering down of steps began later to denote that Park Lane was waking up to its evening duties of dinner and assembly. The postman beat his loud rat-tat at the door below and poured in little piles of letters, many of them addressed to him who lay so quiet in that darkened chamber, and cared nothing now for all they could contain. The day began to fade quite away, and the last ray of the sunlight, after dancing a sort of fantastic farewell now on the floor, now on the ceiling, and now on the white face, had vanished from the chamber. Darkness set in. The faint evening stars could send no beam or glimmer through those closed curtains into that sombre room. Scarcely did the white face upon the bed reveal itself through the dusk and gloom. Had a human gazer been there he would have seen in the only object which relieved the darkness something far more appalling than the darkness itself. After a while the lighted lamps of the street began to send a flickering radiance into the room. Strange shapes seemed to start from the walls and floors, from the curtains and the tapestries. Every chair, table, crevice, joint seemed to creak and groan as if in agony. Hush ! Was that a sigh or a sob which sounded so dismally, or was it but the waving of the trees in the park ? Hush !

The spaniel started from his sleep and whined dolefully. He crept up to his master's face and licked his cheek, and in piteous whining seemed to beseech him to awaken. The

bird stirred and rustled ; a watch on the table ticked and ticked as if its beat had grown stronger and louder with the coming on of night. Hour after hour passed. No one came near that shunned and terrible room. The dead man was left to the company of his bird and his dog all through the ghastly twilight and the phantom-haunted night.

Meanwhile the coroner's jury had found a verdict of 'wilful murder' against some person or persons unknown, and all the newspapers were hard at work preparing for the next morning's full account of the inquest and the Park Lane Tragedy.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE ÉPOPÉE OF THE RED-BRICK HOUSE.

AGAIN, again Pierre Valpierre fled. Nature had formed this man to be a benefactor and a worker. Society had made him a felon and an outcast. He had been a fugitive from justice—justice!—in Paris. He is now a fugitive from justice in London.

He had fled from the scene in Park Lane of which he had been a passive witness. He had fled, not merely from justice, but from crime. He had fled from the guilty.

The mysterious protection which had once before withdrawn him from the very fangs of the tiger law was again tendered to him—nay, pressed upon him.

He had refused it.

Firmly, but not with anger and disdain.

The felon in his cell had unlearned the lessons of anger. The outcast had been taught not to disdain. Society had done its utmost to teach Pierre Valpierre how to hate. Pierre Valpierre had only learned how to love.

But he would have no aid from the mysterious protectress, whose white hands bore the bloodstains, whose white lips quivered with hate.

‘ You will not betray me ? ’ said the eager woman. ‘ I saved your life before.’

Valpierre smiled a sad but radiant smile.

‘ Betray ! Valpierre betray ! Impossible.’

The woman of magic and of blood looked into his eyes fixedly.

‘ I am safe,’ she said.

She extended her hand. He did not refuse it.

‘ Repent,’ he said. ‘ Oh, sister ! Penitence. Pardon. Love.’

‘ Too late,’ she said with a bitter smile. ‘ All too late.’

‘ Before the purpling dawn,’ said Valpierre, ‘ is the darkest of the night. Leave the night and prepare for the day.’

He pointed upwards.

‘ Never ! ’ she passionately exclaimed. ‘ Life here, life here above all. I must live. I will live.’

He placed his hand upon her forehead and was gone.

He would not be the betrayer. He could not be the accomplice.

Therefore he fled.

Fled through the dark and noisome centre of the great Babel. He knew that he was followed. Flaming behind him appeared through the darkness the tiger-eyes of justice.

He buried himself in the sanctuary which is under the protection and bears the name of St. Giles. Infinite vortex of men and passions ! Wild whirlpool of surging crime ! There the man becomes a wolf ; the woman a hyena ; the child a lynx.

Through this jungle of human wild beasts Valpierre fled, not knowing whither. Under every lamp, at every street corner, he saw the placards which offered five hundred pounds for his head. In every police constable he saw a pursuing foe.

Stranger to England, he believed the English policeman steeled by duty against the charms of love or gold.

He erred—but it matters not now.

Through a Dædalean labyrinth of streets and lanes he found himself buried in a *cul-de-sac*. High walls, blank and dead, upon the one side. Small squalid tenements, ruined and apparently lifeless, on the other. In the neighbourhood vast masses and clusters of houses had been pulled down to make way for improvements, for the railway and the telegraph. The wild race of man had been driven back to shelter in the farthest recesses and hiding-holes. In this lane lived or burrowed, on the one side, countless families of outcasts.

But on the other side ?

Only a huge wall.

What behind it ?

This was what Valpierre did not know.

He prepared to retrace his steps.

But, with the caution of the fugitive, he looked before he marched.

Lo ! at the mouth of the *impasse*, he saw three men arrive, halt, and peer cautiously down.

They were his pursuers.

Return was then impossible.

Scarcely two minutes to decide. They would instantly search the lane—the houses.

Ha ! The right angle of the wall.

Valpierre had all the convict's arts of escape. Given the right angle of any wall, smooth although as marble, he could scale it. With hands, knees, shoulders, hips all working together.

A moment, and he was on the top. Scratched, wounded, but not out of breath. Noiselessly he descended on the other side.

The wall was forty feet in height.

He lay on the wet earth inside. His ear was to the

ground. He could hear the detectives outside. It was a dark, foggy, autumnal night.

He heard them search house after house. He knew by the talk and by the steps that one kept guard in the lane while two searched through the squalid tenements.

At last, when more than two hours had passed away, he knew that the hunt was given up. The game had stolen away.

Had they climbed the wall they must have found him inside.

But they did not climb the wall. Partly because they could not, partly because they believed that no one else could.

Even police justice is blind.

They departed.

But Valpierre did not move from the cold damp earth whereon he had crouched like the beast hiding from the hunter. He crouched there all through the long cold night, and until the colder dawn broke grey and livid over the shuddering earth.

Where was he ?

A vast, damp, dreary garden. A garden only to be seen in winter and in solitude. Black, mouldy, lugubrious, sombre. A freezing regularity. A heart-chilling order. Order like that of the detective and the prison.

Through the dark walks and soot-covered trees a large, square, turreted, brick building. For me, too regular, precise, drear, almost awful.

Valpierre could not doubt that through the night and the morning he heard strange wild shrieks and occasional snatches of unearthly song issuing from divers parts of the mansion.

The outcast had studied life in all its forms—even in its aberrations and grotesques.

He knew that he was in the grounds of a private lunatic asylum.

The morning came on. How to escape?

Hush! Did he not hear steps? He lay still and breathless. He listened.

Yes.

The light but slow step of a woman. Valpierre was glad.

Outcast of men, he ever put his faith in woman.

Woman sins, hates, falls, perishes, degrades her body, sells her soul.

But she never betrays. That is reserved for man.

The story of Delilah was written by a man.

Valpierre left his hiding-place, and came fearlessly forward. Fearlessly, but not rapidly. His limbs were chilled and cramped from the damp earth and the miasmatic night.

Towards him there came a female form. Pale, melancholy, languid, dressed in black. A young, beautiful, sad woman.

A patient perhaps—a harmless lunatic.

Valpierre stood still. The lady advanced, her eyes fixed upon the earth. She came near.

Valpierre had learned composure and self-control in a school where lessons are taught with an iron rod.

But when he saw that face he started. Years had passed away since aught had caused him to start before.

Yes, he started. For in that face and form he seemed to see before him her whose bloodstained hand he had pressed, from whose livid presence he had fled, so lately.

Milder, sweeter in aspect. Nay, all mildness, sweetness, sadness. Younger looking, perhaps, but surely the same. Yet no—not the same.

Where had he seen that face and form before?

She raised her eyes and saw him. First a careless, apathetic gaze, as if not unused to find her footsteps watched. Then a keen and scrutinising glance. Then a look of wild surprise and bewildered recognition. Then

a wild shriek would have startled the raw morning air, but that Valpierre placed one hand upon her lips.

‘Hush !’ said the outcast in a calm whisper. ‘If there be mystery here, let us open the gates noiselessly.’

‘I am not mad,’ said the girl with a shudder.

‘Look in my eyes,’ said Valpierre. She met his gaze calmly and clearly.

‘You are sane,’ said the convict, ‘as I—aye, it may be even far more so. Do you know me ?’

‘Yes,’ she replied. Tears filled her eyes for the first time. ‘Once you saved my life. Oh, that you had left me to be precipitated from that crag when the horses were bearing me on !’

‘You are,’ he said, ‘the English Miss—Miss Palegrave. Only for a moment did my memory fail me. But I had heard that either you or your mother was dead—and I saw her not many hours ago.’

She would have fallen but he caught her in his arms.

‘Oh, take me away from this !’ she sobbed. ‘Anywhere, anywhere, away. I am the victim of the most terrible plot. I and one other. Where is he ? Let us fly to him quickly—quickly.’

Valpierre would have borne her to him. But he could not get out, and even were he out he did not know of whom he spoke.

But she spoke no more, for she had fainted in his arms.

He raised her tenderly and gently. He bore her towards the right angle of the wall behind which he had crouched.

He listened.

Outside all was silence.

Inside the trees moaned and whistled in the shrill blast. Faint screams were heard from the red-brick house. The morning was dawning clearer and clearer. She

remained senseless. He did not strive to recall her to consciousness.

‘It is time to act!’ said Pierre Valpierre. ‘Five minutes more, and we are lost!’

They were not lost.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE SEVEN LAMPS AND THE FIERY EXTINGUISHER.

LOUIS FARBRICK’s marriage day was approaching. It was an autumn evening, wild and sad, and he sat alone. He had had the society of Philip Latimer somewhat earlier; they had smoked and talked together, and neither was very lively. ‘Good-night, old fellow,’ said Philip, on leaving, ‘I wish I could see you looking a little more cheerful. I ought to wear the willow and the brow of sadness, while you had your temple crowned with something else—I quite forgot what—and looked all happiness and rapture, and that sort of thing. But somehow, although I am not quite jovial myself, yet I think I look a little less solemn than you.’

Farbrick smiled and pressed his hand, and Philip’s cigar went blazing down the street.

Farbrick sat alone and reflected. What terrible change had come over his life, his feelings, his whole being! He ought to have felt on the very summit of happiness, and yet his soul was absorbed by mere despair. A weight was upon his heart which he could not lift.

He sprang from his seat. ‘What influence,’ he exclaimed, ‘is over me? Am I possessed by a fiend? Is hell allowed to assume a sovereignty over humanity and to torture us even on this earth? Cursed be the day that first submitted me to this horrible spell. My reason sinks under it. Where is the sorceress who once tormented me?’

Is she permitted to exercise her powers and arts even from the grave itself? Appear and answer me, Lamia Montbesome, Norna Strange, Lucilia Palegrave! Dead or living, come forth and show yourself! If any mystic bond ever linked us together even for one terrible and hideous moment, let my call have force to summon you now. Sorceress, demon, appear!

A cold, thrilling air rushed through the room, and gleaming in the darkness were the faint outlines of the luminous form.

‘I appear,’ spake the voice, ‘because the power is gone that lately held me in thrall. Louis Farbrick, you are mine. No power on earth can rescue you. I hold you through the potency of your affections.’

‘Restore *her* to me as she was,’ passionately exclaimed the tortured man. ‘Give back her mind, her soul, her love, her former self to my Lucilia, and I care not though you were the very fiend of fable and took my soul at last.’

A faint hissing laugh was heard.

‘I can do so,’ said the voice. ‘The task is not so difficult. Return to her. She shall be inspired and guided by me. Do all that she asks unquestioning, and she is saved to enjoy youth, intellect, and happiness. Fail but one moment, and she is lost for ever! ’

The vision was gone.

Farbrick left a hasty message with his servant to say that he had gone to Park Lane, and, mounting his horse, galloped from the house.

She lay upon a sofa nearly lifeless. A mystic lamp, burning with a deep purple hue, stood in the centre of the floor. Seven smaller lamps, forming a circle, were ranged around. Their flames were of crimson, green, blue, yellow, white, mauve, and magenta fire.

‘A moment more,’ she faintly said, ‘and I shall be lifeless. You, and you alone, of all earth, can save and

restore me at this crisis. Ask me nothing more. I fade. I sink. Should one of yonder lamps expire, should the perfumes from this vase fade for an instant from my nostrils, should the dew from that phial dry on my lips, I am lost to you for ever. Be bold and watchful and I revive—and then, then ! '—her voice grew weaker—‘ you are mine, I yours, for ever ! ’

She was mute. She lay motionless.

Louis Farbrick watched over her. He would have wrought any spells, yielded to any sorcery which promised to redeem his life from its present condition, and to restore her whom he loved as she was when first he loved her. He, the savant, the materialist, the scorner, was forced to become the dreamer, the miracle worker, the magician.

At another moment he could have smiled with bitter scorn. Now his whole faculties were concentrated upon the feeding of the lamps, the applying of the perfume to the nostrils, the moistening of the lips with the liquor.

It was a task of terror. Even the strongest nerves must have sometimes quivered. Racked as his fibres had long been, he could no longer distinguish the real from the unreal. When a lamp burned less brightly, a phantom, formless and awful, seemed about to extinguish it, and Farbrick sprang to replenish it. Mocking, hissing voices appeared to fill the room. Eyes of fire glared upon the physician from the central darkness. Cold dead hands pressed his own burning fingers. Snaky folds seemed to crawl around his brow. Hot demon kisses were slimed upon his forehead. The air was now dense, poisonous, stifling. He dared not open a window. Suddenly the heat of the room sank out with a sigh, and the cold of the Antarctic froze his marrow. Faces of vague and spectral horror thrust themselves close up to his, glared with contorted lines upon him, and then vanished. Sometimes a deep sigh thrilled through the room, and then a yelling laugh. White, sylph-like forms, such as the Rosicrucian

dreamed of, floated above him in blue, vaporous halo. Then the room was suddenly, as with a breath, filled to suffocation by countless fantastic and hideous shapes. Then all was darkness and loneliness save for the lamps on the floor and the white form on the couch.

Up ! the green lamp is fading. Quick, to replenish it. Back, back ! ere the moisture of the mystic phial dries on the lips.

Thus hours passed away. In all horror or agony Farbrick never failed or faltered in his task. Enough that he had been promised this should be the last. Any ordeal would have been welcome which restored to him his own being and the soul of his beloved !

Hush ! That is surely an earthly voice ! A loud knocking at the door ! Who dares to interrupt at such a moment ?

He trimmed the lamps, perfumed the nostrils, moistened the lips, and made no answer.

Again, again, again a knocking.

‘Admit me,’ said a deep, masculine voice. ‘I come to see Dr. Farbrick—and I must see him.’

‘Away !’ exclaimed the physician. ‘I see no one—no one to-night. Begone until to-morrow !’

‘I must see you,’ said the voice outside. ‘You will thank me for interrupting you.’

‘Hence !’ screamed Farbrick. ‘Let no human being dare to disturb me now !’

Heavens ! What tone was that ?

‘Louis, oh, my Louis !’ wailed the voice of a woman from without ; ‘it is I ; it is Lucilia !’

He started up, and was rushing to the door. His eye fell on the lifeless form before him.

‘Louis, oh, my Louis !’ again was heard from without.

The mauve lamp was waning. A moment, and the lips would be dry.

‘Madness and mockery !’ he exclaimed. ‘It is the voice of some demon striving to lure me from my task. Away !

No power of hell or heaven shall distract me from this which I have to do.'

A sob was heard outside, then a powerful hand shook the door ; then, one desperate push from without, the door was dashed open, and Pierre Valpierre stood on the threshold, a female form clinging to him.

'It is he !' she screamed. 'It is my Louis,' and she rushed with a cry of joy into the arms of the physician.

'Powers of heaven !' he exclaimed, 'what miracle is this ?'

He pressed her to his heart. Yes, it was she—she beyond all chance of doubt—his own, his own Lucilia.

As he sprang to meet her the green lamp, which he was about to trim, was flung to the floor. The fierce, intense flame licked up the carpet and the very boards.

One by one the lamps died out. Only that in the centre still remained burning.

'Light, light !' screamed Farbrick. 'You are indeed my own Lucilia ; but, oh, heavens ! what form is this ?'

He lifted the central lamp and held it to the couch. The perfume had exhaled ; the lips were dry and shrivelled ; the seven lamps were out ; and there lay upon the couch a haggard, withered, wasted, hideous corpse !

They gazed in speechless horror. Not a word was spoken for several moments.

What fierce light was that which illumined the room ?

'We must save ourselves,' said Valpierre calmly ; 'the house is on fire.'

The falling of the green lamp had lighted up a conflagration.

Valpierre lifted up the girl as if she had been an infant and sprang from the room, dragging the bewildered Farbrick after him. As they leaped from the last stair the roof and upper floorings fell in, and the flames streamed as from the mouth of a furnace upward, upward to the skies ! In vain the fire-engines, in vain the efforts of human power,

in vain the floods of water poured upon the ruins. The fire which the green lamp had lighted, whatever its mystic source, no human agency could extinguish until it had seized and devoured its prey. Where the Park Lane house had stood in all its splendour, the grey of morning dawned upon a roofless, windowless, shapeless, blackened ruin ! The secret of the house had perished, like its inmate, for ever.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE FINALE.

WHAT became of Louis Farbrick and his bride ? For that Lucilia Palegrave, the real and the recovered, became his bride, surely no rational being can doubt.

What became of Pierre Valpierre, the outcast ?

What became of Philip Latimer ?

Did Louis Farbrick retire to some distant land ? Did Pierre Valpierre accompany the bride and bridegroom, and have a seat at their chimney corner, and play with their children until his death ? Did Lucilia turn out to be his long-lost daughter ? Had he a long-lost daughter ? Did Lucilia inherit all the vast possessions belonging to the late Mrs. Palegrave, and which the late Count Foscoli had endeavoured to alienate ? I regret to say that upon these points I can only conjecture. Judging from precedent, I should say that Louis Farbrick and his bride lived long and happily in some far country ; that Pierre Valpierre made a remarkably sanctified end ; and that Philip Latimer found somehow or other a will of the late Earl de Gauntlet, Baron Fitzmace (his lordship, you will remember, died rather suddenly after a pleasant little dinner party at Greenwich, whereat Mesdemoiselles Fifine and Clotilde formed part of the company), which will made him, the said Philip Latimer, heir to immense wealth and various town and country residences.

But the mystery of the story? Who was Lucilia Palegrave the elder? What relationship did she bear to Lucilia Palegrave the younger? Was she in good truth a sorceress, and had she been first Lamia Montbesome and then Norna Strange? Did she really renew her youth by inhaling in some mystic way the vital powers of young maidens? Or was she only the descendant of the witch, the granddaughter of Norna Strange, and herself a deluded believer in magic, natural and unnatural, who expired at last in quite an ordinary way, although at a somewhat peculiar moment, and who suddenly turned old and shrivelled through lack of the customary visitation of Madame Rachel?

All these questions I do not pretend to answer. I have told all I know; and I fear that the deeper mystery must be pronounced, in the remarkable words of a certain illustrious nobleman, 'one of those things no fellow could understand.'

[January, 1886.



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